



What are special interest projects?

A special interest project (SIP) is a health promotion and disease prevention research project funded by a division of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (such as the Division of Adolescent and School Health or the Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity) or other Health and Human Services (HHS) agencies (such as the National Cancer Institute). A SIP focuses on a topic of interest or a gap in knowledge or research. It can also support the development of effective state and local public health programs and policies. In addition to providing the funding for a SIP, the division or agency sponsoring the project outlines broad goals for it and assigns a scientific collaborator. Each project is funded as a cooperative agreement for at least 1 year and a minimum of \$100,000, but many are multi-year projects that receive several million dollars.

Who conducts SIPs?

SIPs are competitive scientific projects and research opportunities offered to researchers associated with the 33 academic centers that constitute the Prevention Research Centers (PRC) Program. Only currently funded PRCs are eligible to respond to SIP announcements. The PRCs are housed within schools of public health or medicine (with an accredited preventive medicine residency), and the researchers represent diverse medical, science, and social science disciplines, including epidemiology, statistics, evaluation, and behavioral science. The PRCs focus on underserved populations and address multiple health issues, settings, and age groups. The centers partner with community-based organizations, health departments, education agencies, businesses, and other sectors of society. All PRCs use a community-based participatory research approach, and the main projects of many PRCs focus on developing or implementing evidence-based interventions or programs.

What types of SIPs are possible?

The PRCs have established long-term relationships with minority and underserved communities. To access large, diverse populations, SIPs can be designed in several ways:

- **Single PRC:** The SIP supports one PRC to conduct a specific research project.
- **Multiple PRCs:** The SIP supports two or three PRCs to conduct different dimensions of a research project or to test strategies in different geographic locations.
- **Thematic research network:** The SIP supports several PRCs that collaborate on a specific health issue; one PRC is funded as the lead or coordinating center. Current networks address cancer prevention and control, healthy aging, physical activity policies, and cardiovascular health intervention research and translation.



The Prevention Research Centers are a network of academic health centers, partner communities, and public health practitioners that conduct community-based participatory research to prevent disease and disability.

How are SIPs developed and funded?

Each fall, the PRC Program office issues a call for SIPs. Divisions and agencies can identify one or more projects and provide broad goals and objectives for each SIP request for proposals. The project descriptions are consolidated into a funding opportunity announcement that is reviewed and approved by CDC and HHS. Approved SIPs are released to the PRCs for competition each spring; PRCs are eligible to apply for one or more SIPs. The recipients are selected through a peer-review process, which includes a Special Emphasis Panel (SEP) of external experts and an internal review panel of senior federal officials. SEP members are selected based on their discipline specialty and methodological expertise as well as the project's research topic and study population. The SEP reviewers assess each application against specific criteria and provide an overall score for each one that reflects how well it meets the criteria. The internal review panel focuses on programmatic and technical merits of the application as well as budget concerns. The scientific collaborators identified by the sponsors work with the funded PRCs.

What are examples of SIPs?

SIP topics address research gaps in public health practice that are not being addressed by existing intramural or extramural research mechanisms.

- **Evaluating an Arthritis Self-Care Program.** Compares questionnaire responses from people who received the Arthritis

Basics for Change self-care training kit with those of people who did not; assesses how the program affected levels of pain, depression, arthritis knowledge, self-efficacy, and daily activity.

- **Using Barbers as Peer Educators to Convey Information on Early Detection of Cancer.** Determines how barbers can act as peer educators to help African American male customers increase knowledge of the cancer types for which they are most at risk (prostate and colorectal).
- **Examining the Validity of Screening Questions for Assessing Epilepsy.** Explores the usefulness of five epilepsy-related questions in CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System by administering questionnaires to groups of people with and without epilepsy.
- **Developing and Testing an Intervention to Help Parents Reduce Their Children's Television Viewing.** Teaches parents to disconnect television viewing from eating, set and enforce media use rules, and identify alternatives to television and other media use for their children.

- **Preventing Heart Disease Among American Indian and Alaska Native Youth.** Designs and evaluates a school-based health education curriculum for American Indian and Alaska Native youth in grades 7 through 12.
- **Developing Messages to Address Concerns About Influenza Vaccination Among African American Adults.** Assesses why people in the target population resist getting influenza vaccine and seeks to test and refine new messages and strategies to encourage such vaccination.
- **Defining the Public Health Role in Depression and Depressive Disorders for Older Adults.** Identifies effective interventions for adults aged 60 or older who have depression.
- **Examining Disparities in Out-patient Rehabilitation Among Stroke Survivors.** Examines whether race, ethnicity, gender, age, or socioeconomic status are associated with differences in referrals to and enrollments in outpatient stroke rehabilitation and the type of treatments provided.

The Basics of Special Interest Projects

- *Competitive, peer-reviewed cooperative agreements for extramural research projects.*
- *Awarded to investigators associated with the Prevention Research Centers.*
- *Funded for at least 1 year and \$100,000.*
- *Sponsored by agencies of Health and Human Services.*
- *Used to fill scientific research gaps.*