The Practice Oriented Research Training (PORT) Program

Application Guide

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The PORT Program

The University of Michigan MICHR PORT Program is a didactic and experiential mentored research training program to provide practicing clinicians without formal training in research the fundamental skills to design a research project, apply and be reviewed for funding, conduct research, present findings to local and national professional audiences and write manuscripts for peer review.

The PORT program begins in April with a period of in-person sessions that take place from 5:15 – 7pm on Wednesday evenings on the medical campus, typically held at the CVC. Sessions include didactic as well as discussion portions. Attendance at these in-person sessions is vital, as participants share their progress each week and take part in group dialogue about each team’s project. Participants develop their research question into a feasible research project through the process of writing a short grant application. Participants are asked to further develop their work each week based on feedback and to submit homework to the group facilitator for the next class. At the end of the in-person sessions which span about 12 – 14 weeks, participants are given 2 – 3 months to continue to work with mentors on their grant proposal which will be submitted in the Fall.

Grant applications are reviewed by a convened group of researchers who provide feedback and score the proposal. Typically, the majority of the proposals can be funded each year and funding is based on the quality of the grant. If funded, PORT scholars will continue on with the PORT program to implement their project. This is a two year commitment (with a 1 year, no cost extension option) in which PORT scholars work with their mentor team to complete the project and disseminate their research findings. For the two year period with a PORT grant award, scholars have protected time to do their project which needs to be attested to in the departmental commitment letters, described below. Time spent prior to the grant award period is not cost-shared and completed in addition to the work week which is why in-person sessions are held in the evenings.

Eligibility and Expectations for the PORT Program

The PORT program is designed specifically for clinicians, from any discipline and background, who do not have formal training in research (e.g., research fellowship, completion of a PhD). Clinical faculty members are also eligible for PORT.

If you are not sure you are eligible, please contact the program directors, Susan Murphy and Claire Kalpakjian at MICHR-PORT@umich.edu.

Departmental authorization is required for admission into the PORT program. Specifically, the trainee’s home department must agree to a 50% cost share (up to $5,000) if the project is selected for funding. The trainee’s supervisor must also give approval for participating in PORT.

PORT Team members are expected to attend didactic classes. Occasionally, classes may be missed due to scheduling conflicts. But MOST didactic classes must be attended by all the PORT team members. At least one PORT team member must be present at each class. As scheduling conflicts arise, it is the responsibility of the team members to notify the PORT mentors.
The Online Application

The online application is your first step towards becoming a PORT trainee! After reading the information in this guide, please complete the entire application. You may also save and come back to the application. Just follow the instructions on the screen after clicking, “Save & Return”.

If you have any questions about the application, please contact Shannon Marshall at marshsm@umich.edu.

Applications are due no later than February 12, 2016

Below is some helpful information about completing each section of the application form.

The PORT Team

The first section is where you will enter information about the trainees. Many PORT trainees work in teams, but this is not required.

- **Home Department**: As described above, departments cost share the PORT grant (if awarded). The department providing the cost share is considered the home department. In most cases this will be the department of the principal investigator (PI), but not always.

- **The Principal Investigator**: The PI is the trainee that is designated as the lead for the team, if applicable, and project. The PI is the primary point of contact throughout the training and is responsible for submitting materials, such as progress reports.

- **Who are Team members?** Team members on a PORT team are other clinicians who also have no formal training in research. They are also considered PORT trainees and may come from any discipline or department/division.

- **Who are NOT Team members?** Other investigators such as faculty members (with formal training in research) or other people who are collaborating with you because they have some special expertise or knowledge are NOT considered PORT team members. Instead, they are considered co-investigators. If you and your team are accepted into the PORT program, you will then tell us about other people on your team.

- **A note about questions from the National Institutes of Health**: There are several items about each team member’s race, disability and economic background. Because the NIH supports MICHR, this information is collected from each trainee. You are free to not answer any or all of these questions. Your decision to answer or not has no bearing on the application!

Mentors, Department Authorizers and Supervisors

The success of PORT trainees depends, in part, on the support of mentors, departments and supervisors. To ensure that everyone is informed about their role in the trainee’s success, several letters of commitment are required in the application. Note that two of three are required before an application may be reviewed. Program descriptions and templates are provided in separate downloadable files that you can easily share to facilitate this process. If
you are having difficulty with securing these, please contact Shannon Marshall at marshsm@umich.edu.

- **Mentors**: Each PORT team has at least 2 mentors. One is the “program mentor” who is assigned once the training is underway. The other mentor is someone who has clinical and/or research expertise in the team’s area of focus. This is generally identified at the time of the application, but in some cases, a mentor has not yet been identified. Mentors, if identified at the time of application, are requested to provide a letter of commitment. You will upload a scanned copy of the signed mentor letter into the application or an email message. If a mentor has not been identified, the team will be contacted by MICH to help identify one prior to admission into the program. *See the downloadable file in the application form called “Mentor Letter of Commitment” that you can share with your mentor.*

- **Department Authorizer and Supervisor**: This is generally someone in department administration who has authority to sign off on cost share agreements and other related (and generally financial) matters. If you are not sure who this is, please talk with your department or division administrative contact. The department authorizer also provides a letter of commitment to provide the cost-share and support for the PI and team’s enrollment in the PORT program.

The PORT program training is held in the evenings so that clinical schedules are disrupted as little as possible. If the project is awarded, there will be some time devoted to the project and this may require off-loading some clinical responsibilities or other impacts on clinical work. To ensure support for the trainees to carry out the work, if funded, a supervisor commitment is also required.

If the department authorizer and/or supervisor have any questions about the letter and commitment required, please have them contact Shannon Marshall at marshsm@umich.edu. You will upload a scanned copy of the signed departmental commitment letter into the application. *See the downloadable file in the application form called “Department Letter of Commitment” that you can share with the department authorizer.*

**Research Question, Target Population and Gap in Knowledge**

- An essential part of PORT training is the development of a research question and study design to answer that question. In the application, we require a brief statement of the tentative research question, target population and the gap in knowledge the potential project is aiming to fill. Keep in mind that your question and target population is likely to change over the course of training. This is OK! The purpose of this section of the application is to help determine a team’s readiness to embark on training.

Once your application is submitted, it will be reviewed by PORT Program leads. You will receive an email with a decision within 2 weeks of submission. If you have any questions at any time, please contact Shannon Marshall at marshsm@umich.edu.

**Thank you!**