

# Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce Program

## *Tips for Successful Proposal Development*



National Institutes of Health  
Office of Strategic Coordination - The Common Fund

# Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce Program

**Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD)**: Provides opportunities and resources for institutions to implement transformative, broad-based approaches to the training of students undertaking biomedical research. BUILD awardees will address identified needs at the institution and develop visionary approaches that encompass individual, social, and institutional-level factors.

**RFA-RM-13-016**

**National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN)**: Develops a highly networked set of motivated and skilled mentors from diverse disciplines linked to mentees across the country. NRMN will also develop best practices for mentoring, provide training for mentors, and provide networking and professional opportunities for mentees.

**RFA-RM-13-017**

**Coordination and Evaluation Center (CEC)**: Coordinates consortium-wide activities and evaluates the BUILD and NRMN programs. The CEC will work collaboratively with BUILD and NRMN PIs to identify the hallmarks of a successful biomedical research career and will be the focal point for disseminating information to the broader biomedical research community.

**RFA-RM-13-015**

# Program Goals

- Enhance the diversity of biomedical scientists who are funded by the NIH and/or otherwise contribute to the NIH-funded workforce.
- Catalyze a systemic change in biomedical training and research environments to foster participation by more diverse groups.
- Develop and test innovative approaches to recruitment, training, and persistence of trainees from diverse backgrounds.
- Evaluate progress throughout the funding period, disseminating lessons learned to the broader extramural community.
- Supplant less effective practices and methods with successful transformative evidence-based approaches.

# Good Ideas will be...

**Novel**: Approaches should not replicate or expand the many training programs already in existence, but should build upon and extend beyond these programs.

**Innovative**: Approaches and strategies should both build upon and extend beyond existing efforts to diversify biomedical research training and mentoring.

**Transformative**: Approaches should catalyze a systemic change in the institutions' biomedical training and research environments to foster participation by more diverse groups.

# Award Mechanism

## Cooperative Agreement (U54)

- The U54 is a specialized center grant that allows various coordinated activities to take place within an award
- NIH staff will have substantial scientific or programmatic involvement that is above and beyond normal stewardship role in awards
- The CEC awardee will collaborate with the BUILD and NRMN awardees through the Diversity Program Consortium to achieve program goals

# Components of a Successful Application

- Strong Idea
- Clear Plan
- Articulate Impact

# What Determines Which Applications Are Funded?

- Scientific Merit of Proposal
- Program considerations
- Availability of funds

# Principles of Success

- Understand the program mission
  - BUILD, NRMN, and CEC are tightly integrated as a Consortium
- Consider collaborators (partners), as needed, to complement your expertise and experience
- Understand the peer review process
- Review best practices of writing an application



# Application Development Strategy



➤ Think

➤ Plan

➤ Write

# Remember ... Before you start

- Talk to Program Staff listed in the FOA
- Read ALL instructions
  - *PHS 398 (revised 8/2012) and RFAs*
  - *Additional budget forms required for BUILD applications*
- Review Resources
  - Technical Assistance Webinar Materials
  - Frequently Asked Questions
- Know your audience
  - *Are you clearly conveying to reviewers a novel, innovative and transformative approach to address the main question in your proposal?*
- Propose activities which you are passionate and totally committed to doing

# Good Grantsmanship

- Searching the NIH Diversity website (<http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/index>) is a good start ... *but follow up with personal contact*
  - Talk with program staff *early* to ask questions and get feedback
  - Read the three related Diversity FOAs to understand how programs must integrate with and compliment each other

# Good Grantsmanship

- Good ideas, clearly presented
- Align your application with the new review guidelines to maximize impact:
  - Significance
  - Investigator
  - Innovation
  - Approach
  - Environment

# Align with Review Criteria

- Overall Impact
- 5 Core Review Criteria:
  - Significance
  - Investigator
  - Innovation
  - Approach
  - Environment

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-09-025.html>

# Final Priority Score

## Overall Impact

- The likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved:
  - in consideration of the following five core review criteria, and
  - additional review criteria (as specified by the FOA)
- Address this on your Specific Aims page!

# Review Information for BUILD

More information about the review process can be found in the technical assistance webinar slides.

## Scored Review Criteria

### Significance

### Investigators

### Innovation

### Approach

### Environment

#### *Examples – Standard Review Criteria*

If the aims are achieved, how will knowledge be advanced?

Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work?

Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or methods?

Are the conceptual framework and planned activities appropriate to the aims of the network?

Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?

#### *Examples – Specific for the BUILD FOA*

Is the project likely to substantially enhance the engagement of undergraduate students in biomedical research training and prepare them to pursue research careers?

Do the investigators show evidence of the ability to lead institutional transformation, develop, and direct a program focused on biomedical research, research training, and mentorship?

Are the approaches to be used innovative in the ways in which students from diverse backgrounds are engaged and trained?

Is the overarching vision for development of transformative approaches to biomedical research training compelling, and are the activities well suited to address this vision?

Are the combined environments of all partner institutions likely to foster effective collaborations for teaching and mentoring diverse students in coursework and in research?

**The criteria above serve as examples only. Applicants should consider the entire list of questions for each criterion.**

# Review Information for NRMN

More information about the review process can be found in the technical assistance webinar slides.

**Significance**

**Investigators**

**Innovation**

**Approach**

**Environment**

## *Examples – Standard Review Criteria*

If the aims are achieved, how will knowledge be advanced?

Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work?

Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Are the conceptual framework and planned activities appropriate to the aims of the network?

Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?

## *Examples – Specific for the NRMN FOA*

Does the vision established by the PI/PD(s) represent a significant advance over current mentoring strategies?

Do the investigators show evidence of the ability to lead, develop, and direct a national network of collaborative mentorship efforts?

Does the application describe novel and innovative mentorship, networking, and professional development strategies?

Will all career stages and disciplines be well served?

N/A

**The criteria above serve as examples only. Applicants should consider the entire list of questions for each criterion.**



# Review Information for CEC

More information about the review process can be found in the technical assistance webinar slides.

## Scored Review Criteria

**Significance**

**Investigators**

**Innovation**

**Approach**

**Environment**

### *Examples – Standard Review Criteria*

If the aims are achieved, how will knowledge be advanced?

Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work?

Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Are the conceptual framework and planned activities appropriate to the aims of the network?

Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?

### *Examples – Specific for the CEC FOA*

Are the overall plans for the coordination and evaluation to be conducted by the CEC likely to foster a collaborative environment across the consortium?

Has the PD/PI demonstrated the ability to coordinate complex consortia to establish and implement joint goals?

Does the application include innovative quantitative or qualitative approaches, methodologies, or study designs to evaluate the effectiveness or impact of the BUILD and NRMN programs?

Are potential evaluation methods robust and is the vision for comparing across BUILD and NRMN sites compelling?

Is the environment of the awardee institution adequate to support the CEC in accomplishing its goal of managing and evaluating the diverse BUILD and NRMN activities?

**The criteria above serve as examples only. Applicants should consider the entire list of questions for each criterion.**

# Good Review

*Understand the dynamics of peer review:*

- Reviewers will review many applications
- Make your application easy to read and easy to understand
- The impact and significance should be clear throughout the application
- Convince them to be your advocate
  - *Get them on your side!*
- Review the technical assistance webinar for more specific information about the review process for the Diversity Program.

# Keys to Good Presentation

- Be realistic ... not overly ambitious
- Discuss potential problem areas and possible solutions
- Be explicit
  - Reviewers cannot read your mind!
  - Don't assume they know what you intend!

# Common Reasons Cited for a Weak Application

- Lack of or weak impact
- Significance not obvious or weak
- Too ambitious, lacking focus
- Unclear or flawed hypothesis
- Applicant track record weak or lacking appropriate expertise
- Feasibility unsupported
- Approach flawed
- Poor writing

# Hallmarks of an Outstanding Application

- The potential to broadly transform mentoring and training for students from diverse backgrounds: IMPACT is high
- High degree of novelty and innovation
- Clear rationale
- Relevant experience training/mentoring diverse students
- Clear and focused approach that provides unambiguous results
- Careful attention to details
  - Fonts, spelling, etc.

# How to Increase the Chance Your Application Gets Funded?

- Good ideas, well presented
- Understand the literature
- Write clearly
- Be complete but not verbose
- Never lose sight of the significance
- Point to the impact
- Pay attention to details

# Where Do I Get More Information?

NIH homepage: <http://www.nih.gov/>

Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce  
Website:

<http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/index>

Office of Extramural Research (OER):  
<http://www.grants.nih.gov>

CSR website: <http://www.csr.nih.gov/>

# Where Do I Get More Information?

## Resources available on the Diversity Program Website

<http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/index>

- FOAs
- Recording and slides from the technical assistance webinar
- FAQs
- Interactive Forum
- Slides and notes from Interactive Sessions
- Planning Grant award information
- Background material

Want to be alerted when the website is updated? Sign up for the Diversity Program email list here:

<http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversityregister>