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Q&A Webinar

June 26, 2024 @ 1:00 PM EDT

Please submit your questions in the "Q&A" box

(scientific inquiries will not be discussed)

National Institutes of Health

Office of Strategic Coordination - The Common Fund

commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence

earlyindependence@od.nih.gov

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Q&A Webinar

- Submit questions in the "Q&A" box
- Scientific or situationally specific questions will not be discussed (email us)
- For additional questions, contact us at EarlyIndependence@od.nih.gov
- Webinar recording & slides will be posted on website at commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence
- For more application guidance, see our Application & Award Guide on website (includes example applications)

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Panelists

Trish Labosky, Ph.D.

Program Leader
Office of the Director

Brittany Mason-Mah, Ph.D.

Scientific Review Officer
Center for Scientific Review

Becky Miller, Ph.D.

Program Officer
Office of the Director

Breadth of Common Fund Programs

27 Programs in 3 Broad Categories

Transformational Science and Discovery

New scientific principles, models, and research resources

- 4D Nucleome
- A2CPS
- CryoEM
- DS-I Africa
- ExRNA
- Global Health
- HRHR
- Human Virome
- IDG
- MoTrPAC
- NPH
- SMaHT
- SPARC
- Oculomics

Re-Engineering the Research Enterprise

New approaches to conducting research, translating research into interventions, and supporting a robust workforce

- ComPASS
- DPC
- FIRST
- SCGE
- UDN
- Complement-AIRE
- Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities and Advance Health Equity

Catalytic Data Resources

Data resources to accelerate discovery

- Bridge2AI
- CFDE
- HuBMAP
- Kids First
- Metabolomics
- SysBio

CF programs may be useful for your research: funding opportunities, access to high-end instruments, databases, reagents, protocols, ...

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

Supporting scientists at all career stages proposing outstanding high-risk, high-impact research

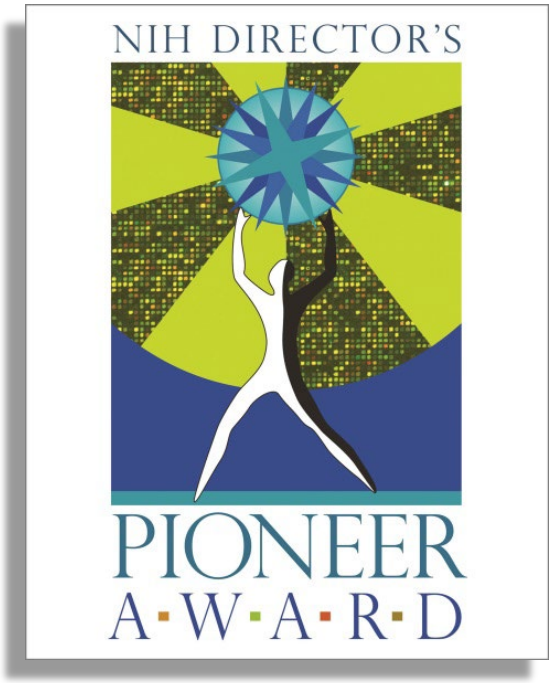
High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

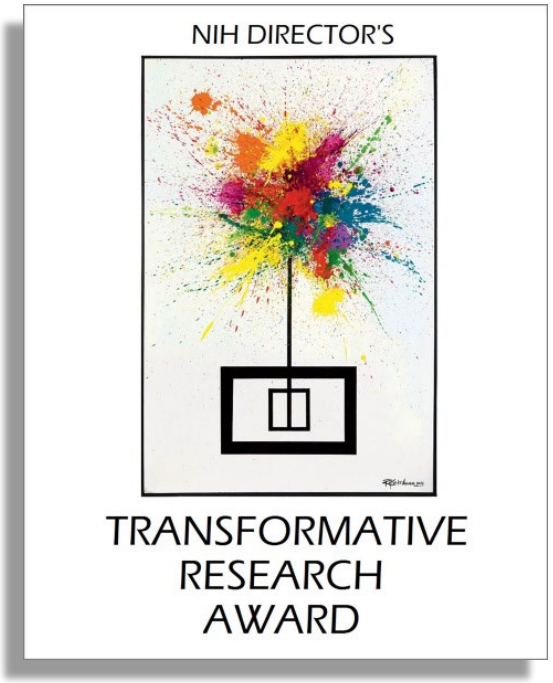
Annual funding opportunities

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

High-risk, high-impact ideas

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program





No preliminary data or detailed experimental plan required

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

Any topic relevant to NIH mission welcome

Behavioral, social, biomedical, applied, and formal sciences,
and basic, translational, or clinical research

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

Encourage applications from investigators with diverse backgrounds and from the full spectrum of eligible institutions

HRHR Working Group

Chair
Tara Schwetz (OD)

Program Leader
Trish Labosky (OD)

Members
Kristin Abraham (NIDDK)
Hugh Auchincloss (NIAID)
Geetha Bansal (FIC)
Alexey Belkin (NIAMS)
Sangeeta Bhargava (NEI)
Rebecca Black (OD)
David Bollweg (OD)
Gene Carstea (CSR)
Jennifer Collins (NIEHS)
Christine Colvis (NCATS)
Bill Duval (NINR)
Emmeline Edwards (NCCIH)
Zeynep Erim (NIBIB)
Rene Etcheberrigaray (NIA)
Asanté Forde (OD)
Nancy Freeman (NIDCD)
Brionna Hair (OD)
April Harrison (NIDCR)
Gabriel Hidalgo (NIDCR)
Dana Hill (CSR)
Sharon Isern (CSR)
Ray Jacobson (CSR)
Susan Koester (NIMH)
Trish Labosky (OD)
James Li (CSR)
Roger Little (NIDA)
Brittany Mason-Mah (CSR)
Becky Miller (OD)
Brett Miller (NICHD)
David Miller (NCI)
Michael Morse (OD)
Ellie Murcia (OD)
Imoh Okon (CSR)
Michael Pazin (NHGRI)
Steven Pittenger (NCATS)
Josh Powell (CSR)
Ananda Roy (OD)
Diana Rutberg (NIDCR)
John Satterlee (NIDA)
Dana Schloesser (OD)
Tara Schwetz (OD)
Stefania Senger (CSR)
Doug Sheeley (OD)
Carol Shreffler (NIEHS)
Lillian Shum (NIDCR)
Elena Smirnova (CSR)
Barbara Sorkin (OD)
RV Srinivas (NIAAA)
Nathaniel Stinson (NIMHD)
Meryl Sufian (NLM)
William Tyler (NINDS)
Stephanie Webb (NHLBI)
Ariel Zane (NIGMS)

Best tip…

Read the entire funding opportunity (**RFA-RM-24-005**).

- Follow the instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide, except where the funding opportunity provides alternate instructions.
- Funding opportunity instructions supersede SF424 instructions.

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

Enables outstanding early career scientists to move rapidly into independent research positions by skipping the traditional postdoc

- Single PI applications only
- Complete terminal research degree or clinical training between May 1, 2023, and September 30, 2025
- No previous postdoc experience >12 months
- In non-independent position at time of application
- Requires independent position from host institution
- Limit of 2 applications per institution
- Commit 9.6 months each year to research for first 2 years
- Awards up to $250,000 per year for 5 years
- Site visit in first year

DP5 Application

Application Limit	2 applications per institution
Research Strategy Essay	12 pages: • Scientific challenge and significance • Innovativeness of approach • Investigator's qualifications • Plans for development
Facilities & Other Resources	Institutional support detailed
Budget Information	Modular budget
Letters of Collaboration	Should be included
Biosketch	Only PI's is allowed
Research Effort	9.6 months per year for first 2 years
Letters of Reference	3-5 required

Select Scientific Areas

- Primary (required) and secondary (optional)

    1. Behavioral and Social Science (BSS)
    2. Chemical Biology (CB)
    3. Clinical and Translational Research (CTR)
    4. Infectious Diseases and Immunology (IDI)
    5. Instrumentation and Engineering (IE)
    6. Molecular and Cellular Biology (MCB)
    7. Neuroscience (NS)
    8. High-Throughput and Integrative Biology (HIB)
    9. Bioinformatics and Computational Biology (BCB)

- Indicate on “SF424 (R&R) Cover Form” in Agency Routing Identifier

Facilities & Other Resources (Institution)

- Important section that should not be overlooked
- Tailor to candidate and avoid overuse of boilerplate language
- Provide context for reviewers
- Answer questions in the following headings:
  - ***Candidate selection process*** – process and criteria to select candidate
  - ***Position details*** – description of the position
  - ***Institutional resources commitment*** – description of the lab space, office space, facilities, supplies, equipment, administrative staff, support staff, additional funds, etc. provided by the institution
  - ***Institutional career development*** – plans to ensure independence, mentorship, integration into community, resources, other opportunities

Specific Aims

- Distillation of proposal into one page
- Use the following headings:
  - ***Research Objectives*** – describe research project and overall approach
  - ***Institutional Support*** – how will institutional support allow you to accomplish your research objectives
  - ***Early Independence Rationale*** – what qualifications, experience, and skills do you have that will allow you to accomplish your research objectives

Research Strategy Essay

Use following headings (12-page limit):

1. Rationale for omitting postdoc
2. Evidence of transition to independent position
3. Career development plan
4. Evidence of leadership
5. Host institution interactions
6. Research challenge
7. Approach
8. Innovation
9. Relationship to previous work
10. Timeline

Points to Consider

- Convince reviewers that you:
  1. Are ready for independent research
  2. Will have the resources and support needed to succeed
  3. Have a significant research topic and innovative approach to addressing it
- Make reviewers feel confident that you are ready and prepared to begin your independent research career
- Given the review process, be sure your application can be easily appreciated by people well outside the field (watch out for jargon) and provide context
- Though no preliminary data are required, convince reviewers that you have thought deeply about the project — identify risky aspects, how they will be mitigated, alternate approaches
- Convince reviewers that the research will be performed in a robust and rigorous manner — validate new approaches, provide estimates of numbers of human or animal subjects (if used) and why, include that sex will be considered as a biological variable (if appropriate)

Data Management & Sharing Plans

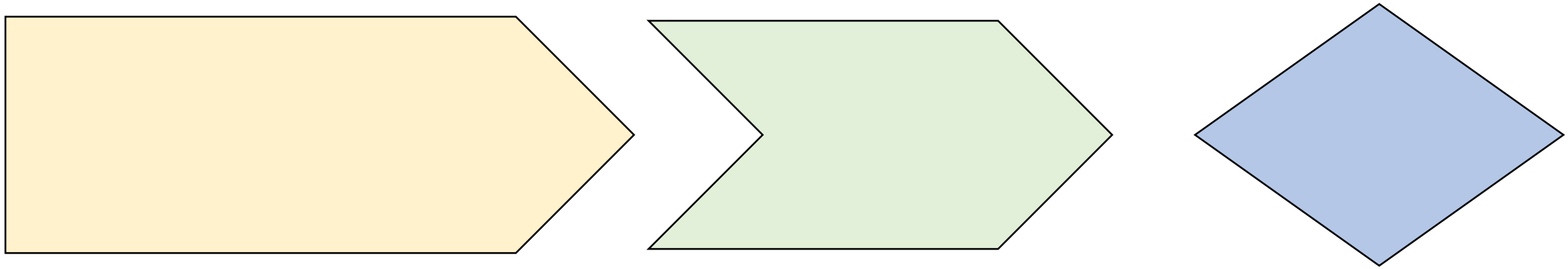
Plans should explain how scientific data generated by the research project will be managed and which scientific data and metadata will be shared

- Attach in “Other Plan(s)” section in “PHS 398 Research Plan Form”
- Recommended not to exceed two pages
- Include:
  - Data type
  - Related tools, software, and/or code
  - Standards
  - Data preservation, access, and associated timelines
  - Access, distribution, or reuse considerations
  - Oversight of data management and sharing
- Include costs in budget and justify in “Additional Narrative Justification” in “Modular Budget Form”
- Budget considered by reviewers & plan reviewed by NIH program staff
- Adjustments made through Just-in-Time (JIT) process
- Becomes part of Terms & Conditions of award
- Go to **sharing.nih.gov** for more information & examples

Early Independence Award (DP5) Review Procedures, 2024-2025

Brittany Mason-Mah, Ph.D
Scientific Review Officer
Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health
Brittany.mason-mah@nih.gov

Multi-Stage Review Process



Stage 1: Subject Matter Expert Mail Review

Stage 2: Editorial Board Review

Applications then move on to Program for additional considerations

Review Stages

- Receipt of applications:
  September 6, 2024
- Stage 1 Review by Subject Matter Experts:
  October-December 2024
- Editorial Board consideration:
  January-February 2025
- Discussion and final scores by Editorial Board:
  March 2025
- Recommendation by Council of Councils, NIH:
  May 2025

General Review Considerations

- It is understood that the Principal Investigator is at a very early stage of research career and that substantial preliminary data are not required.

- The intent of the award is to enable the Principal Investigator to start a productive, independent research career and have a significant impact on the field.
  - This is a big step to skip over postdoctoral training. It is essential that your readiness for this step be clear.

- **Focus on the promise of the investigator**
  - **Biosketch** and **Letters of Reference** are critical sources for evaluating the prospects and promise of the investigator.

- **Institutional support and commitment**
  - Specific details from the “facilities and other resources” section
  - Letters of support

- **Significance, innovation and approach of the science**

How Applications are Scored

- Overall impact score (1-9)
  - 1 indicates having the highest likelihood to make an impact, “the best”

- Five criteria (also on 1 to 9 scale):
  - Significance
  - ***Investigator***
  - Innovation
  - Approach
  - ***Environment***

Stage 1 Review – Subject Matter Experts

- All applications are reviewed in one Special Emphasis Panel.
- All CSR review branches participate in assigning expert reviewers to applications based on the appropriate scientific areas.
- Each application is assigned to three Stage 1 reviewers who are Subject Matter Experts; they provide full written critiques and scores.
- The primary focus is on the science.

Stage 2 Review - Editorial Board

- The Board includes senior scientists with broad expertise.
  - Scientific areas initially identified by PI during application submission are useful in assigning Editors.
- Each Editor is assigned ~12-15 applications after Stage 1 review is completed.
  - Editors review applications *and* the Stage 1 critiques, and assign an overall impact score to each application, using the 1-9 scale.
  - Editors do not write critiques.
- Board meets in March to *discuss approximately top 50% of applications*.
  - 3 assigned reviewers present the application; all members discuss and score application.
- **Editorial Board scores represent the final scores for the application**.

Board Considerations

- Has the Principal Investigator demonstrated the scientific creativity, intellectual sophistication, and the appropriate skills to launch a vigorous, independent research program?
- Will this award accelerate the candidate's research trajectory?
- Has the host institution committed to providing the Principal Investigator scientific freedom, necessary resources, collaborating faculties, protected time, and appropriate support to develop an independent research program?
- How compelling is the evidence that the project could exert a sustained impact to the field?

Following the Review

- Applicants receive scores within 3-5 business days (in eRA Commons).
  - For *discussed* applications, a final score will be listed.
  - For *non-discussed* applications, no score will be listed; it will say “Not Discussed.”

- All applicants receive summary statements within 30 days.
  - Discussed applications receive a resume/summary of the Editorial Board discussion and critiques from the Stage 1 reviewers.
  - Non-discussed applications receive the critiques from the Stage 1 reviewers.

Tips for Applicants

- Be *very specific* in the institutional support provided.
  - Provide evidence that the position & resources are sufficient for the project.
- Letters of reference should not sound generic. Advise letter writers to comment on what makes you unique and ready to take on this next step in your career.
- Some scientists who evaluate your application may not be from your field but will understand the challenges of doing research.
  - Clearly articulate the significance of your research and how it will advance science.
  - Set reasonable specific aims that can be accomplished within the project resources. Discuss plans to manage problems, long term goals, or next steps.

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Application & Submission

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Budget

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Review

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