

Q&A Webinar

For RFA-RM25-001



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

NIH DIRECTOR'S



PIONEER
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commonfund.nih.gov/pioneer
PioneerAwards@mail.nih.gov

Panelists

Patricia Labosky, Ph.D.

Program Leader

Office of the Director

Becky Miller, Ph.D.

Program Leader

Office of the Director

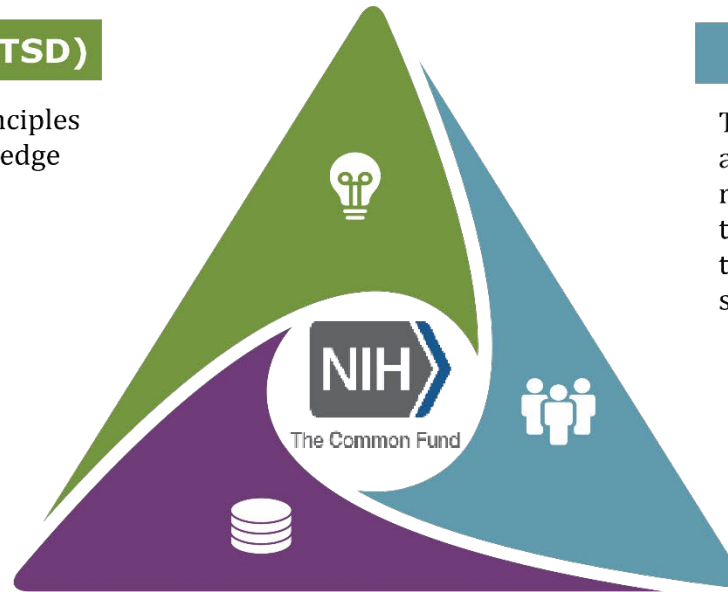
Types of Common Fund Programs as of FY25

Transformational Science and Discovery (TSD)

These **programs** are designed to establish new scientific principles, models, and research resources to transform scientific knowledge and paths to discovery.

- 4D Nucleome
- A2CPS
- CryoEM
- DS-I Africa
- Human Virome
- HRHR
- MoTrPAC
- NIOI
- NPH
- Oculomics
- SMaHT
- SPARC

High-Risk, High-Reward
Research program



Re-Engineering the Research Enterprise (RRE)

These **programs** are designed to transform how we do biomedical and behavioral research, how we make the biomedical workforce as robust as possible to ensure new perspectives and ideas contribute to discovery, how we transition that research into prevention and therapies, and how those successful prevention and therapies can be shared broadly.

- CARE for Health™
- Complement-ARIE
- NBSxWGS
- Replication Initiative
- SCGE
- Transformative Research to Address Health Disparities

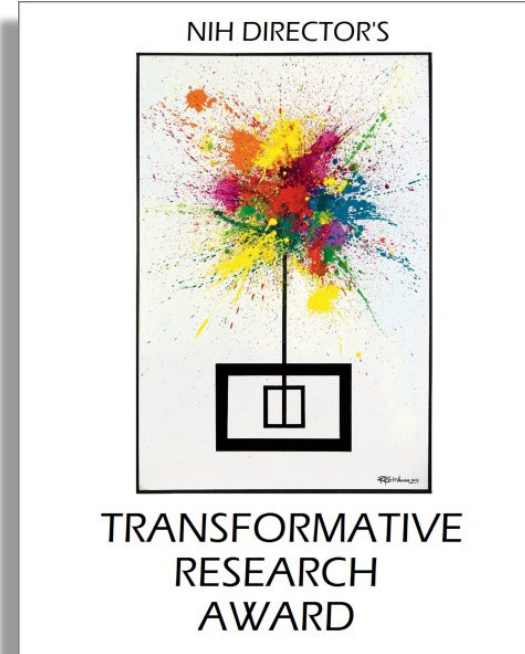
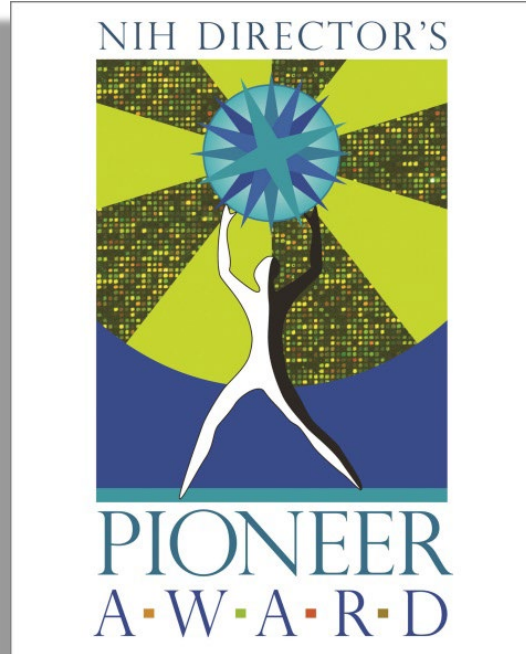
Catalytic Data Resources (CDR)

These **programs** are designed to manage and develop data for scientific discoveries by accelerating research through data resources.

- Bridge2AI
- CFDE
- HuBMAP
- Kids First
- PRIMED-AI
- SysBio

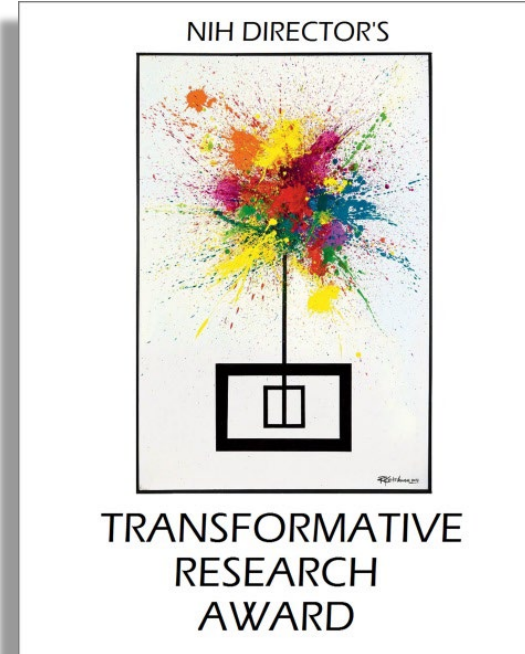
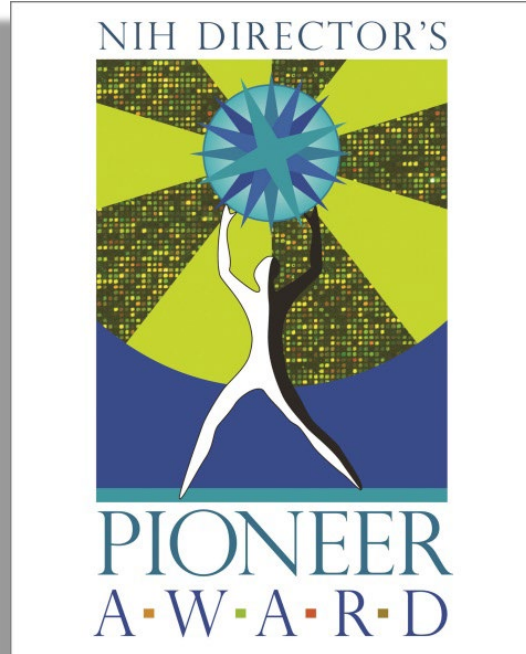
CF programs may be useful for your research: funding opportunities, access to high-end instruments, databases, reagents, protocols....

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program



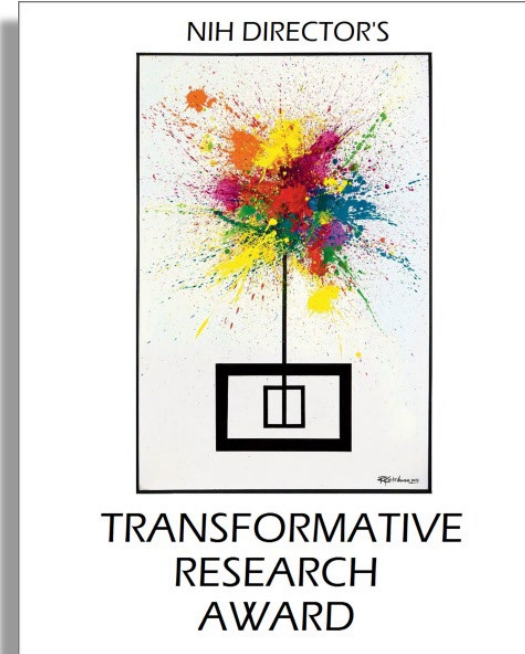
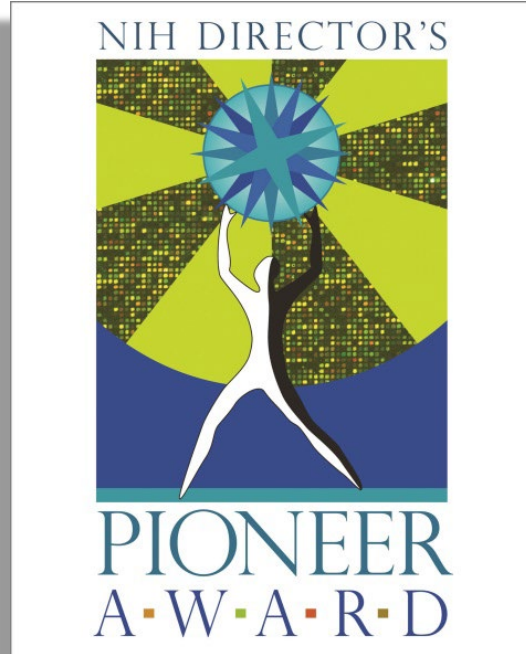
Supporting scientists at all career stages proposing outstanding high-risk, high-impact research

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program



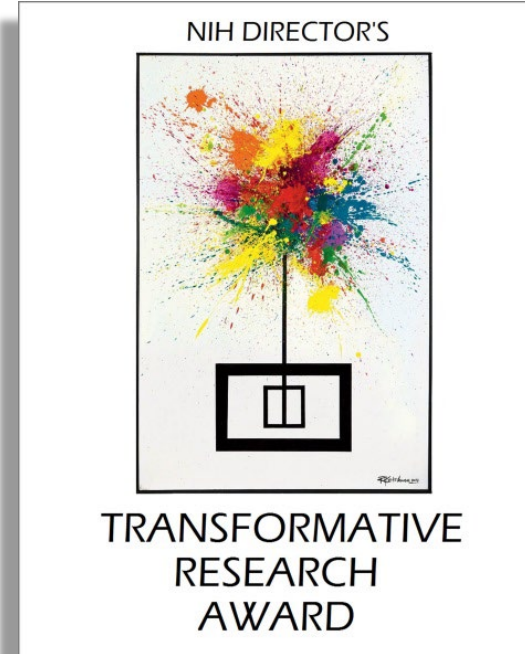
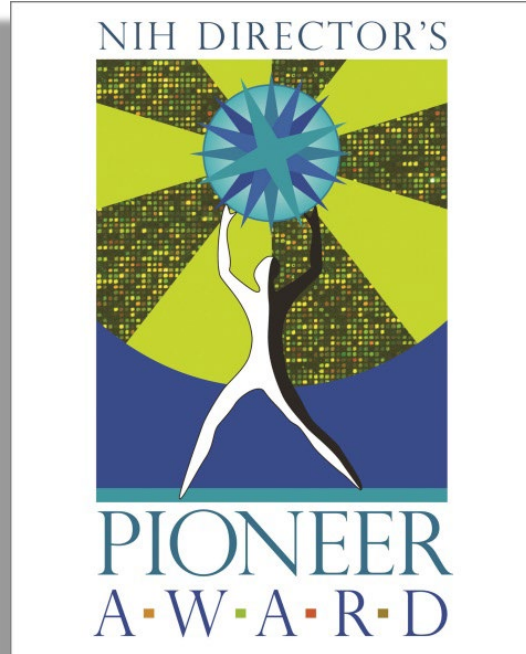
Annual funding opportunities

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program



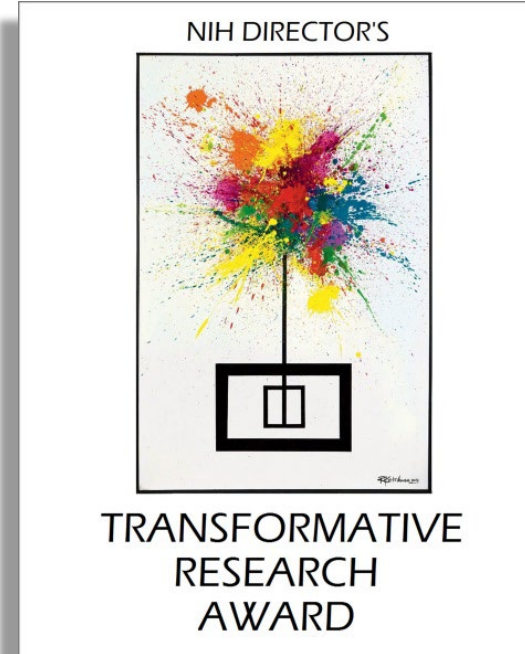
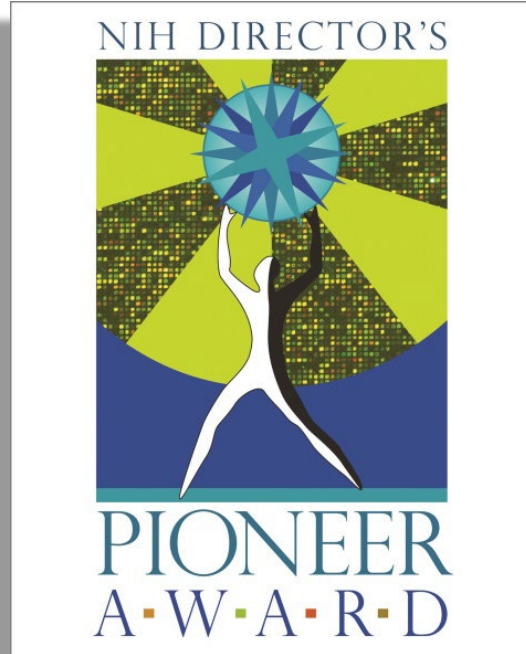
High-risk, high-impact ideas

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program



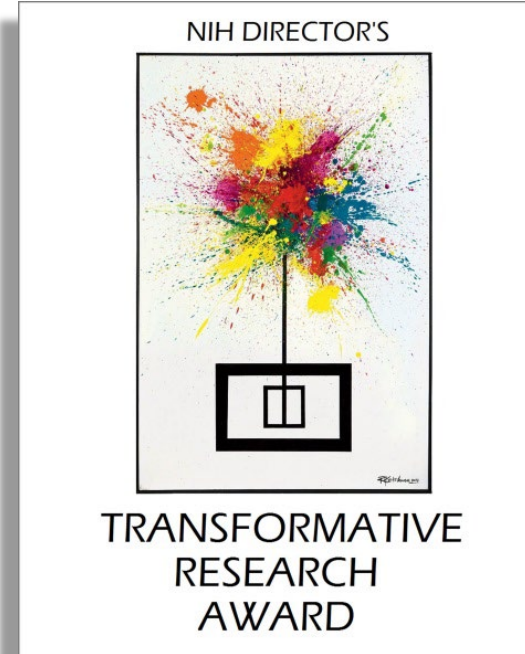
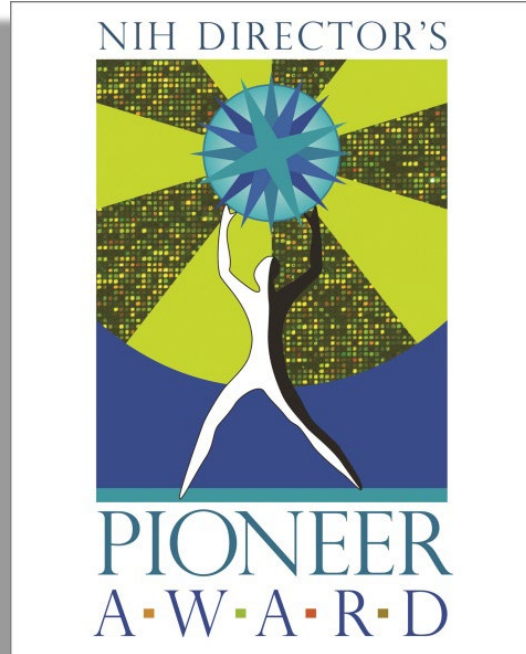
No preliminary data or detailed experimental plan required

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 all eligible institutions

HRHR Working Group

Chair

Nicole Kleinstreuer (OD)

Program Leader

Patricia Labosky (OD)

Members

Geetha Bansal (FIC)

Alexey Belkin (NIAMS)

Sangeeta Bhargava (NEI)

David Bollweg (OD)

Gene Carstea (CSR)

Jennifer Collins (NIEHS)

Christine Colvis (NCATS)

Bill Duval (NINR)

Emmeline Edwards (NCCIH)

Zeynep Erim (NIBIB)

Marcus Ferrone (CSR)

Asanté Forde (OD)

Nancy Freeman (NIDCD)

April Harrison (NIDCR)

Gabriel Hidalgo (NIDCR)

Dana Hill (CSR)

Sharon Isern (CSR)

Ray Jacobson (CSR)

Sarah Leinwand (NIMH)

James Li (CSR)

Roger Little (NIDA)

Brittany Mason-Mah (CSR)

Becky Miller (OD)

Brett Miller (NICHD)

David Miller (NCI)

Michael Morse (OD)

Imoh Okon (CSR)

Vivian Ota Wang (OD)

Michael Pazin (NHGRI)

Steven Pittenger (NCATS)

Dena Procaccini (OD)

Raul Rojas (CSR)

Ananda Roy (OD)

Diana Rutberg (NIDCR)

John Satterlee (NIDA)

Dana Schloesser (OD)

Kristen Schlotman (OD)

Johanna Schneider (NIAID)

Carol Shreffler (NIEHS)

Corinne Silva (NIDDK)

Elena Smirnova (CSR)

Barbara Sorkin (OD)

RV Srinivas (NIAAA)

Nathaniel Stinson (NIMHD)

William Tyler (NINDS)

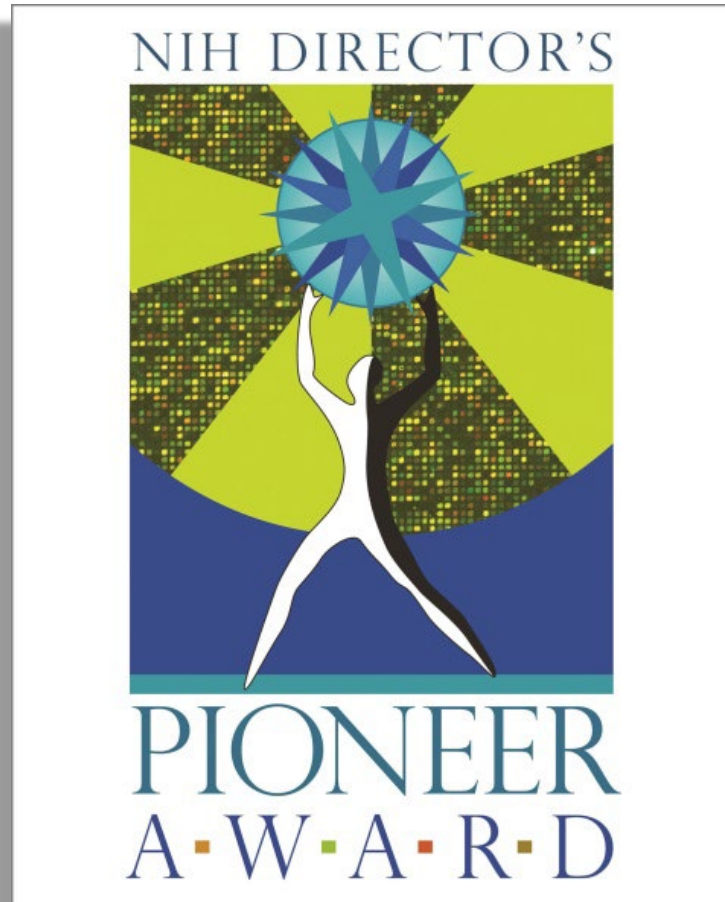
Scott Verbridge (NIDCR)

Stephanie Webb (NHLBI)

Xin Yuan (NIA)

Ariel Zane (NIGMS)

High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program



Supports individual scientists with outstanding records of creativity proposing pioneering approaches to major challenges in biomedical and behavioral research

- Started in 2004
- Single PI applications only
- Open to all career stages
- Must be new research direction
- Requires 3 letters of reference
- Commit major portion of research effort (more than 51% for first three years)
- Awards of \$700,000 per year for 5 years

Pioneer Application

	R01	DP1
Specific Aims page	Required	Do not use
Research Strategy	12 pages including detailed experimental plan and preliminary data	5-page Essay (see later slide for more information)
Biosketch	For all Senior/Key Personnel	For PI only
Bibliography	Required	Do not use; include essential references in Essay
Budget	Details required, esp. for >\$250k direct cost	No detailed budget accepted (indicate only \$3.5M)
Letters of support	Encouraged	Not allowed
Research Effort	Depends on project	At least 51% for first 3 years
Letters of Reference	Not allowed	3 required

Pioneer Application

Unless specifically directed in the funding opportunity, follow the instructions in the SF424 application guide.

This means that, if appropriate, complete the vertebrate animals section, human subjects section, authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources, ... (These documents do not drive priority scores!)

Complete as best as you can, reviewers will keep in mind that you may have not worked out all the details yet.

Pioneer Application

In 5 pages, use the following headings or subsections:

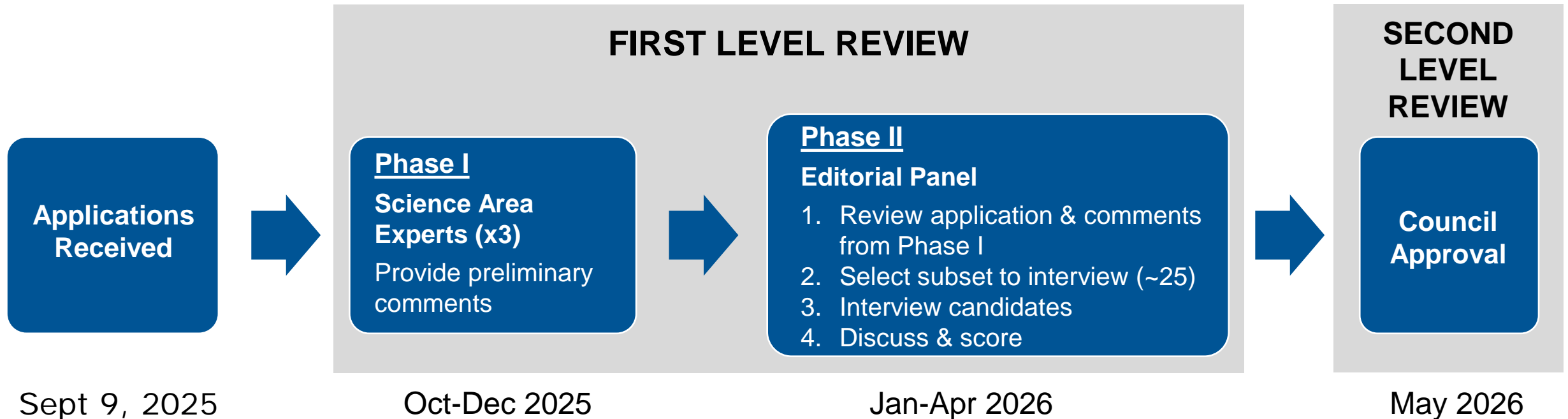
- ***Project science areas*** – 1 digit code and abbreviation for primary and secondary areas
- ***Project title*** – descriptive title of proposed project
- ***Project Description*** – Describe scientific importance of topic; overall innovative approach to be taken; preliminary data not required, but accepted; state that to comply with the funding opportunity, a detailed and extensive experimental plan is not being provided; however, provide sufficient evidence that proposal has been deeply considered and will be pursued in a robust and rigorous manner
- ***PI's Innovativeness*** – Provide evidence of a history of high innovation
- ***Change in research direction*** – Explain how proposed project is a change in research direction
- ***Suitability for Pioneer Award program*** – Describe why proposal is “HRHR” rather than traditional
- ***Research effort commitment*** – Commit at least 51% research effort toward project
- ***Bibliography/citations*** – Not required, but encouraged to include critical citations; may be in an abbreviated form as long as identifier is unique

Pioneer Research Strategy Essay

Points to consider:

- Given review process used, be sure that what you write can be easily appreciated by people well outside the field for exceptional innovation and potential for unusually broad impact
- May be helpful to begin with a description of the landscape of the field and current state-of-the-art or boundaries; provide proper context for proposal and why what you are proposing is so innovative and potentially impactful
- Ease the reader into the jargon of the field
- Though no data or detailed experimental plan are required, convince the reviewer that you have thought deeply about the project – identify risky aspects, how they will be mitigated, alternate approaches
- Also, convince the reviewer 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)

Pioneer Review Process



Science Area Match

Science area (“mail”) reviewers identify their area of expertise

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)

Phase I - Mail Review

- All Pioneer (DP1) apps reviewed in one special emphasis panel
- Mail reviewers in 9 broad scientific areas/topics recruited
- Each application assigned to 3 mail reviewers
 - 2 reviewers have expertise in the declared 'primary' scientific area
 - 1 reviewer has expertise in the declared 'secondary' scientific area
- Focus on specific Pioneer review criteria
 - The significance and innovation
 - The investigator's track record of conducting highly innovative research
 - A substantial change in research direction motivated by a fundamental new insight

Phase II – Editorial Panel Review

- Editorial panel - group of scientists with diverse scientific background and known for their broad scientific perspective
- With input from Phase I mail reviewers, panel selects ~25 finalists they deem to be the most “pioneering” for a presentation with the review panel in March/April 2026
- Focus on specific Pioneer review criteria
 - The significance and innovation
 - The investigator’s track record of conducting highly innovative research
 - A substantial change in research direction motivated by a fundamental new insight
- Finalist notification will be sent out in mid/late March 2026

Phase II – Editorial Panel Review

Interview

- 10-minute presentation
- 10-minute Q&A
- 10-15-minute closed panel discussion

Focus

- Is the project paradigm-shifting and does it have transformative potential?
- Does the PI have a track record of exceptional scientific creativity?
- Does the proposal represent substantially different scientific directions from those already being pursued in the field and in the PI's lab?
- Not viewed as a logical extension of ongoing projects

Regular R01 vs Pioneer Review

Regular R01	Pioneer Award
One phase review process	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two phase review (mail & panel)• Finalists: PI interview
Subject matter experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mail review: broadly matched expertise vs scientific area• Panel review: not assigned by specific topic expertise
Review criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significance/Innovation• Rigor and Feasibility (Approach)• Investigator/Environment	Review criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Significance/Innovation• Investigator's Innovative track record• Substantial new research direction
Focus tends to be on feasibility in the approach	Focus on exceptional innovation & the PI's track record

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Eligibility



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Application & Submission



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Budget



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Letters of Reference



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Review



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Q&A Webinar

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Thank you for attending!

Webinar recording & slides will be posted on
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For additional questions, email us at
PioneerAwards@mail.nih.gov.



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