

Identifying Programs and Contacting Program Directors

You will be more successful if you understand and contribute to the goals of the program and program director.



Identifying Programs and Contacting Program Directors

Identify program and program director

Prepare a project abstract

Contact the program director



Why Talk with Program Directors?

Program descriptions are the "official line" for the grant program, but may not reflect underlying considerations that determine which proposals are likely to be successful.

Program directors and review panels can develop preferences and dislikes over time that rarely find their way into program descriptions.

Program priorities can shift (substantially!) over time, while program descriptions remain unchanged.

Dialogue gives you an opportunity to cultivate their interest! Educate them about why your project is compelling.

If they are not interested (i.e. if it is not likely to be funded), it is in their interest (and yours) to let you know. The program director can often suggest better alternatives.

If they are interested, they can provide very helpful hints and guidance (appropriate study section, elements of proposal, and scope of work).

If you don't ask, you are missing these insights that would give you a competitive advantage!



Who Are Program Directors?

NIH Program Officers (POs), Scientific Review Officers (SROs) and Grants Management Specialists (GMSs)

POs advise investigators on applying for grants, help them understand their summary statements and provide guidance on managing their awards. They also play a leading role in making funding decisions.

Once NIH's Center for Scientific Review (CSR) assigns applications to the appropriate institute or center and study section, SROs identify, recruit and assign reviewers to applications; run study section meetings; and produce summary statements following the meetings.

GMSs manage financial aspects of grant awards and ensure that administrative requirements are met before issuing a notice of award.



Who Are Program Directors?

NIH Program Officer Responsibilities

Identifies and cultivates interest in scientific areas relevant to Institute mission.

Helps investigators. Answers questions about applications and reviews.

Observes scientific review meetings, and evaluates programmatic merit and mission relatedness of applications. Identifies grants that meet Institute priorities and fill gaps in portfolio. [Cultivate relationship between your project and these interests through your conversations!](#)

Prepares funding recommendations. Attempts to maximize number of projects funded and balance the portfolio.

Reviews annual research progress.



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3 Steps :)

Identify program and program director

Read about program goals to identify a good fit

Look at recent awards to assess fit

Look up the program director (and their portfolio)

Prepare a project abstract

Aims, approaches, and expected outcomes (deliverables)

Define the important gap or need that your work addresses

(Include why you are the one to do this)

Relate your goals and expected contributions with program goals

Contact the program director

Email to request a phone call to discuss if the project is one that the program might consider funding

Call the program officer (or if you are going to be in the area, ask to stop by!)



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What to Talk About?

Is the project one that the program might consider funding? Does it fall within your current priorities? Does it fit a specific FOA? Study section?

What funding mechanism is best for this project and my career stage?

What are some of the reasons proposals are rejected by your review panels? What would you recommend to improve my chances for success?

What is the expected proposal funding rate?

Questions about specific grant requirements (e.g. vertebrate research).

If you are willing and able, you can express interest in serving on a review panel.



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UGA Office for Proposal Enhancement

Suggestions to strengthen your project abstract

Consultation prior to your phone call to program director

Resubmission strategy

Collaborators

References:

What can your NIA program officer do for you? Part 1 and 2

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/blog/2014/01/what-can-your-nia-program-officer-do-you-part-1-before-submitting-your>

<https://www.nia.nih.gov/research/blog/2014/02/what-can-your-nia-program-officer-do-you-part-2-how-get-touch>

Working with NIH Program Officials: Pre-Award & Post-Award
2014 NIH Regional Seminar

Talking to NIH Staff About Your Application and Grant: Who, What, When, Why and How.

<https://loop.nigms.nih.gov/2015/11/talking-to-nih-staff-about-your-application-and-grant-who-what-when-why-and-how/>

Can We Talk? Contacting Grant Program Officers. R Porter.

Research Management Review vol 17:1.



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