4 Questions You Should Answer

1. Am I interested
2. Can I learn more from program
3. Should I Submit an R01/R21 before the initiative comes out
4. Is the initiative multiproject
   1. Could I put together a network for collaborators
   2. What do I have to contribute to others that might compete
High-Priority Topics: Concepts and Initiatives

Questions and Answers

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- What if my question wasn’t answered here, or I’d like to suggest a question?

What are initiatives?

Initiatives are requests for applications (RFA), program announcements (PA), and solicitations that NIAID issues to stimulate research in high-priority or high-opportunity areas of science. RFAs and PAs are called funding opportunity announcements in Grants.gov.

For some areas, we publish an initiative because the research is mandated by law. In other cases, the research community may identify a need, or research may be needed to respond to a public health event.
What's on the Docket? Look at Our Concepts

While your dictionary defines “concept” as a general notion or idea, we're using it as a bit of NIH lingo. It's one you'll want to know.

Here at NIH, concepts refer to the early stage of a potential initiative—a request for applications (RFA), program announcement, or solicitation. We use them to stimulate research in high-priority areas of science, and some have money set aside to fund the awards.

At the May advisory Council meeting, members reviewed our latest concepts to help shape our initial plans and, for some, gave us the go-ahead should we decide later to publish an initiative.

Don’t be put off by cautionary words like “potential” and “should we decide.” Though we can’t guarantee any concept will become an initiative, even if Council-approved, you can still benefit from having this forward-looking information. Here’s how.

Know All the Angles

Concepts can be a useful tool in your funding toolbox if you think of them as a heads-up for potential high-priority areas.

That mindset can help you in two ways:

1. Get an early start planning and writing your application before we publish the initiative.
2. Submit an investigator-initiated application in the same scientific area.

For approach one, you’ll want to consider whether the concept is likely to move ahead or languish. If we are renewing an existing project, we will most likely publish the initiative.

For a new concept, there’s no way to know its fate for sure, but here are some historical data to use as a gauge. For the September 2010, February 2011, and May 2011 Council meetings, 35 of 40 approved concepts became published initiatives. (Those are the latest three meetings that allow enough time for an initiative to come out.)

For more guidance, touch base with your program officer or the contact person listed on Concepts: Potential Initiatives, linked below.
Opportunities and Announcements

Use this portal to stay abreast of funding opportunities and policy and other announcements.

Talk to a program officer—start with When to Contact an NIAID Program Office.

Learn about grant types and opportunities; get advice about whether your area of science fits NIAID's mission.

Learn about funding opportunities and our future plans.

- For information and advice, read our Strategy for NIH Funding.
  - Choose the Grant to learn about grant types and caveats for choosing one.
  - Choose Approach and Find FOAs to decide whether to submit an investigator-initiated application or respond to an initiative.
    - Investigator-initiated Versus Targeted Research
    - Investigator-initiated: Draw On Your Strengths
    - Initiatives—See if it's a Good Match
  - See how you may be able to benefit from NIAID's List of Foundations and Other Funding Sources

Quick Links

- NIAID Funding Opportunities List
- NIH's Parent Announcements
- Concepts: Potential Opportunities
- NIAID's List of Foundations and Other Funding Sources
- NIH Guide
- Standard NIH Submission Dates

Watch for policy changes and other news.

- NIAID Funding Newsletter and Blog—biweekly newsletter.
- Subscribe to Email Alarms—newsletter, funding opportunities, paylines, and other interest areas.
- Special Announcements—all NIAID-relevant NIH Guide announcements except funding opportunities.
- Top Policy Changes—summary of major policy announcements for one year or more.
Potential Approaches

Science based
- focus on scientific priorities
- eliminate duplications
- reduce support for less innovative research
- increase support for highly innovative research

System based
- limit PI’s
- # of Research Program Grant (RPG) awards
- total amount of awards
- size of awards
- PI salaries
- cut Indirect Cost Rates
  - % reduction - treated all institutions equally
  - Tiered approach
Rescuing US biomedical research from its systemic flaws

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The long-held but erroneous assumption of never-ending rapid growth in biomedical science has created an unsustainable hypercompetitive system that is discouraging even the most outstanding prospective students from entering our profession—and making it difficult for seasoned investigators to produce their best work. This is a recipe for long-term decline, and the problems cannot be solved with simplistic approaches. Instead, it is time to confront the dangers at hand and rethink some fundamental features of the US biomedical research ecosystem.

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Taking the Powerball Approach to Funding Medical Research

Winning a government grant is already a crapshoot. Making it official by running a lottery would be an improvement.

By FERRIC C. FANG And ARTURO CASADEVALL

April 14, 2014 7:08 p.m. ET

Participants anxiously await the announcement of the winning numbers, thinking to themselves, "Someone has to win, why not me? Just think of what I could do with a million dollars!" But alas, better luck next time. Powerball? Mega Millions? Unfortunately, no—we are talking about research funding from the National Institutes of Health.
We Move Forward

- Scientifically
- Programmatically
- Administratively
Thank You

- Questions
- Comments