

# Technical Assistance Webinar for RFA-MD-18-012, “*Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) (U54)*”

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**Webinar starts at 2:00 PM EST**



**NIH** National Institute  
on Minority Health  
and Health Disparities

# Webinar Tips

Participants will be in Listening Mode and will not be able to ask questions verbally.

Participants may ask questions using the chat feature. Questions will be answered during the Q&A session at the end of the webinar as time permits.

These slides and a recording of today's webinar will be available on the NIMHD website: <http://www.nimhd.nih.gov/>.



# Agenda

- I. RFA background and objectives
- II. Application information
- III. Peer review of applications
- IV. Timeline for submission, review, and selection of cooperative agreements
- V. Selected FAQs and participant questions



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# Part I:

# RFA Background and Objectives



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# Background

NIH established the Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) program in 1985 in response to Congressional interest in expanding the national capacity for research in the health sciences by providing support to institutions that offer doctorate degrees in the health professions or health-related sciences *and* have a historical and current commitment to educating underrepresented students, and for institutions that deliver health care and clinical services to medically underserved communities.

The RCMI program recognizes the important role institutions with a historical commitment to training diverse individuals and serving disadvantaged communities have played in advancing health-related scientific research.

Program managed by National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) until 2012, when it transferred to NIMHD.



# Background

RCMI Program now includes (in addition to the current RCMI G12 awards):

- Research Centers in Minority Institutions Program (U54)
- RCMI Research Coordination Network (RRCN) (U54)
- Resubmissions allowed
- Center focus on basic biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research based on research project in that area
- Number of research projects now limited to three (3)
- For renewal applications, the progress report goes in the Research Strategy of the Overall component



# Objectives of RFA

To provide cooperative agreement support for specialized research centers in institutions that offer doctorate degrees in the health professions or in a health-related science and have a historical and current commitment to educating underrepresented students, and for institutions that deliver health care, and provide clinical services to medically underserved communities.

Primary goals of the centers are to:

- 1) enhance institutional research capacity to conduct world-class basic biomedical, behavioral, and/or clinical research;
- 2) enable all levels of investigators to become more successful in obtaining competitive extramural support, especially from NIH, particularly for research on diseases and conditions that disproportionately impact minority and health disparity populations;
- 3) foster environments conducive to career development and enhancement for post-doctoral fellows, junior faculty, and other early stage investigators;
- 4) enhance the tools for, conduct of, and dissemination of research generally and specifically for advancing minority health and preventing and eliminating health disparities; and
- 5) establish sustainable relationships with community-based organizations that will partner with the RCMI Institution.



# Part II:

# Application Information



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# Center Eligibility

## Domestic Institution of Higher Education

- Received an average of less than \$50 million per year of NIH support for the past three fiscal years.
- Awards doctorate degrees in the health professions or the sciences related to health.
- Has a historical and current mission to educate students identified as underrepresented in biomedical research

**OR**

Has a documented track record of:

- (1) recruiting, training and/or educating, and graduating underrepresented students.
- (2) for institutions that deliver health care services, providing clinical services to medically underserved communities.



# Center Focus Area(s)

Centers must have an explicit focus on one or more of the following areas: basic biomedical, behavioral, and/or clinical research.

- Behavioral and Clinical research areas expected to emphasize minority health and health disparities.

Focus can only be demonstrated by one or more research projects within the focus area.



# Center Cores and Components

## Administrative Core

- Provides administrative and logistical support for all center activities.
- Provides career enhancement activities for post-doctoral fellows and junior investigators.
- Provides an evaluation of each proposed activity/core and evaluation of the impact of the center.



# Center Cores and Components

## Research Infrastructure Core

- Provides resources to assist investigators with developing design and analysis plans for studies.
  - Includes faculty-level expertise in research methodology, specialized laboratory techniques, statistics, bioinformatics and/or health informatics.
- May provide linkages to other NIH-supported programs (e.g., CTSA, NIMHD COEs).
- Core research resources must be for multiple users across various disciplines.
- Minor alteration and renovation (A&R) costs allowed up to \$500K in first year only to improve research/core laboratories or animal facilities.



# Center Cores and Components

## Investigator Development Core

- Provides pilot project program that:
  - 1) allows researchers to generate preliminary data for subsequent submission of grant applications related to minority health and health disparities, or
  - 2) develops new technologies to better position the institution to conduct basic biomedical research.
- Program may support up to 5 pilot projects per year at \$30K-\$50K per project.
  - Minimum direct cost budget allocation for Pilot Project Program is \$150,000/year annually).
- Pilot project investigators should be at the senior post-doctoral or assistant professor level and include individuals from backgrounds underrepresented in biomedical research career.



# Center Cores and Components

## Community Engagement Core

- Facilitates long-term relationships with community based organizations to:
  - address their health-related concerns.
  - to promote participation in research and recruitment and retention of study participants.
  - to disseminate findings from research projects.



# Center Cores and Components

## Research Projects

- Up to 3 research projects may be proposed in basic biomedical, behavioral, and/or clinical/health services research.
  - Having a project in each area is not required.
  - Behavioral and clinical/health services project(s) must emphasize minority health or health disparities.
- Projects may vary in scope and budget, but together must comprise 20-30% of direct costs per year.
- Projects may be led by investigators of any rank, including senior or established scientists.



# Center Cores and Components

## Recruitment Core (Optional)

- Supports hiring of investigators who have track records of independent research support who can serve as mentors to early stage investigators.
  - New faculty members may be provided with start up funds of up to \$100,000 direct costs per year for up to 2 years.



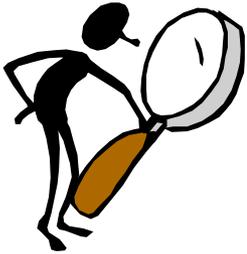
# Award Budget

- Budgets limited to \$3,000,000 in direct costs per year.
- Budget request should correspond to number of focus areas (basic biomedical, behavioral, clinical research).
  - 3 focus areas - up to \$3 million direct costs
  - 2 focus areas - up to \$2,250,000 direct costs
  - 1 focus area – up to \$1,500,000 direct costs
- Optional minor A&R costs of up to \$500K in first year do not count towards these direct cost limits.



# Part III: Peer Review of Applications





# U54 Program Peer Review

- Applications will be assessed for completeness by the Center for Scientific review (CSR).
- NIMHD program staff will assess the applications for responsiveness.
- NIMHD scientific review officer (SRO) will assemble a panel of experts from the extramural community to peer review the applications.



# Preparations for Peer Review

## FOA Specific Characteristics

- Program goals
- Mechanism specific characteristics
- Review Criteria: Specific to this FOA queries
- Additional Review Criteria (e.g. Human Subjects)

## Administrative Review of Applications

- RFA requirements
- personnel
- expertise

# Reviewer Selection

## Scientific Expertise

- as defined in FOA
- collective content of the applications

## Attention to Conflict of Interest

## Diverse representation

- gender
- demographics
- geography

# Review Process

- Pre-Meeting Written Opinions
- Overall Impact
- Resume

# Peer Review Criteria

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-MD-18-012.html>

## Overall Core

- Criteria : Each receive a score

Reviewers will provide **an overall impact score** to reflect their assessment of the likelihood **for the Center** to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria

## Administrative Core; Research Infrastructure; Investigator Development Core (**Pilots**); Community Engagement Core; (optional) Recruitment Core

Reviewers will provide **only one impact score** to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for **the Cores** to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved

## Research Project Core (1-3 projects)

- Criteria : Each receive a score
- Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria in the determination of scientific merit and give a separate score for each.



# Additional Review Criteria

(included in the determination of the overall score)

## Human subjects

Protection of Human Subjects against research risk  
Five criteria

Inclusion

Women

Children under the age of 18

Minorities



## Other criteria

Vertebrate Animals

Four criteria

Biohazards



# Additional Review Considerations

(criteria not included in the determination of the overall score)

**Other application information which is assessed but not included in the determination of the impact score**

- Select Agents Research
- Resource Sharing Plan
- Budget and Period of Support
- **Authentication of key Biological and/or Chemical Resources**

<http://grants.nih.gov/reproducibility/index.htm>



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# U54 RCMI Program Peer Review Meeting

Some applications may be “streamlined” -- not discussed (ND)

- Applications may undergo a selection process in which only those applications deemed to have the highest scientific and technical merit (generally the top half of applications under review) will be discussed and assigned an overall impact score.

Final Impact Score based on average of all voting reviewers x 10

- Scores range from 10 (exceptional) to 90 (poor)

A summary statement for all applications would be available approximately 30 days after the review meeting

**Do not contact the members of the review panel!**



# Videos on Peer Review Topics

The Center for Scientific Review has produced videos with an inside look at peer review for scientific and technical merit and with tips for preparing applications.

[https://era.nih.gov/era\\_training/era\\_videos.cfm](https://era.nih.gov/era_training/era_videos.cfm)

<https://www.csr.nih.gov/csrprp/> (New)

## Resources For Using ERA Commons

<https://era.nih.gov/sites/default/files/eRA-Commons-Resources.pdf>

## Problems with Submission Processing

Always contact ERA Service Desk.

<http://grants.nih.gov/support/>

# In Doubt

## Phone NIH

- Peer Review, Program and Grant Administration Contacts are included on the last slide of this presentation and in the RFA.

# **Part IV:**

# **Timeline for Submission, Review, and Selection of Cooperative Agreements**



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# Timeline

- Letter of Intent Due Date: October 21, 2018
- Application Due Date: November 21, 2018
- Peer Review Meeting: February, 2019
- Council Review: May, 2019
- Earliest Start Date: July, 2019



# **Part V: Selected FAQs and Participant Questions**

Send questions via webinar chat.



## Selected FAQs: Eligibility

Question: Can NIMHD confirm that my institution is eligible to apply?

Answer: No. NIMHD staff can answer questions you have about the eligibility requirements, but it is the responsibility of the institution to determine if all eligibility criteria have been met.

Question: My institution as a whole exceeds the NIH funding limit, but my school is below the funding threshold. Can my school submit an application?

Answer: That depends on how your institution is organized. If your school/department has its own DUNS or NIH IPF number, it can serve as an applicant institution, providing all other eligibility criteria are met.



# Selected FAQs: Eligibility

Question: Does a residency program in a hospital count towards the health-related doctoral degree requirement?

Answer: No. Only Institutions of Higher Education are eligible, per Congressional language that established the RCMI program.

Question: My institution offers health-related doctoral degrees, but not in my department. Can I be the PI on the application?

Answer: This decision would be left up to the applicant institution.



# Selected FAQs: Eligibility

Question: If an institution submits more than one application, will only one application be selected for funding if they all score well in peer review?

Answer: Only one application per institution will be reviewed. If multiple applications are submitted, NIMHD will request that the institution select which application will move forward.



# Selected FAQs: Focus Areas

Question: Can the focus areas shift over the course of the grant period?

Answer: Yes. It is not required that the Center maintain the same foci (or budgets attached to them) over the 5 year period.

However, the funding level for the number of focus areas corresponds to the yearly budget. For example, if \$3 million in direct costs were requested in any budget year, research projects in all 3 focus areas would need to be active in that year.

Question: Do we have to propose a research project in each of the three areas?

Answer: No, unless you're requesting the full budget amount of \$3 Million direct costs.



# Selected FAQs: Focus Areas

Question: Do all research projects and pilot projects in clinical or behavioral research have to focus on racial/ethnic minorities?

Answer: No. Projects can emphasize minority health OR health disparities. Health disparity populations include racial/ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, underserved rural populations, and sexual and gender minorities.



# Selected FAQs: Cores and Components

Question: Should Advisory Committee members be named in the application?

Answer: No. The planned roles and expertise of the Advisory Committee should be described in the application, but it is not necessary to provide names of specific members.

Question: Does each section of the Research Infrastructure Core (biostatistics, laboratory technologies, etc.) have a 6-page limit?

Answer: No. The page limit for the entire Research Infrastructure Core is 6 pages.



# Selected FAQs: Cores and Components

Question: Are there different page limits depending on the scope of the research projects (e.g., R01 level vs. R21 level)?

Answer: No, the page limit for each research project is 12 pages. Remember, this is a page limit, not the number of pages required. Projects that are smaller in scope may not require as many pages as larger projects.

Question: Should individual pilot projects be described in the application?

- Answer: No. The application should describe the Pilot Project Program (soliciting, selecting, supporting, and monitoring pilot projects), not individual projects, which should be selected after the Center is awarded.



# Selected FAQs: Cores and Components

Question: Can salary support for post-docs be included in pilot projects? Other cores?

Answer: Salary support for post-docs is an allowable cost within any center component for those engaged as personnel on research projects or other center activities. Stipends and fellowships, which are associated with training programs, are not allowed in this RFA.



# Selected FAQs: Letters of Intent

Question: Is the letter of intent mandatory? Is the letter of intent binding?

Answer: No and no. The purpose of the letter of intent (LOI) is to give NIMHD, particularly the review office, a sense of how many applications to expect and what kinds of expertise might be needed to review them. It is possible to submit an LOI and then not submit an application, and vice versa.



# Participant Questions



# NIMHD Contacts

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