Navigating NIH Grants

Jessica Worsley
International Grants Facilitator
igfacilitator@uvic.ca
Objective

• Provide an overview of NIH funding opportunities and the grant application process:
  • NIH structure, funding mechanisms and success rates
  • Application components and submission process
  • Tips and resources
• 27 institutes and centres with separate research agendas and budget allocations
• Largest source of funding for medical research worldwide
• Annual investment of nearly $32 billion
  – more than 80% awarded through competitive grants
  – over 50,000 grants to 300,000 researchers at 2,500 institutions in 2016 (total value of $24.8 billion)
• Majority of funding for US researchers
  – 480 foreign awards in 2016 (total value of $191.7 million)
  – 123 Canadian awards (total value of $40.3 million - primarily UBC, McGill and University of Toronto)
  – UVic: two direct awards and eight currently active sub-grants

NIH structure: https://www.nih.gov/about-nih/who-we-are/organization
Award search engine: https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm
Funding programs

• Research grants (R series)
  – R01: Research Project Grant (3 – 5 years)
  – R03: Small Grants Program (max. 2 years)
  – R21: Exploratory Research Grant (max. 2 years)

• Career development awards (K series)

• Research training and fellowships (T and F series)

• Multi-project/Centre grants (P series)

2016 average award & success rates*

  – R01: $484,685/year for 3-5 years (17.3%)
  – R03: $94,196/year for up to 2 years (16.9%)
  – R21: $221,613/year for up to 2 years (15.1%)

Funding mechanisms: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/funding_program.htm
Success rates: https://report.nih.gov/success_rates

* new awards only - rates vary depending on Institute or Centre: https://report.nih.gov/success_rates/Success_ByIC.cfm
Funding Opportunities

• Search grants.gov or NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts: https://grants.nih.gov/funding/index.htm
  – Parent Announcements (PA)
  – Program Announcements (PAR)
  – Request for Applications (RFA)

• Calls are generally open for multiple submission cycles, with three standard deadlines throughout the year

• Check eligibility for foreign institutions

• Confirm participation of relevant NIH Institutes or Centres

• Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) number required to initiate and track application

Annotated FOA: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/Annotated_FOA.pdf
Application Components

• Project summary/abstract (max. 30 lines of text)
• Project narrative (max. 3 sentences)
• Specific aims (max. 1 page)
• Research strategy (max. 6-12 pages depending on program)
• Equipment, facilities and other resources (for each site)
• Biosketches for key personnel (max. 5 pages each)
• R&R budget and budget justification
  – 8% overhead (F&A) for foreign institutions
  – includes PI salary based on effort (for course release or RA support)
  – advance permission required for >$500,000/year in direct costs
• For sub-awards: Letter(s) of intent to enter into consortium
• Additional components as per FOA and NIH Application Guide

Additional Components (if applicable)

- Letters of support
- Consortium justification
- Foreign justification (recommended)
- Resource sharing plan
- Select agents documentation
- Authentication of biological and/or chemical resources
- Vertebrate animals
- Protection of human subjects
- Inclusion of children
- Inclusion of women and minorities
- PHS Inclusion Enrollment Report
- PHS Assignment Request Form (optional)
Application Process

• Applications must be prepared and submitted electronically
• ASSIST (PHSA/NIH) or grants.gov (federal portal)
• Requires eRA Commons ID and institutional DUNS number
• PI initiates application based on FOA number and adds additional users as required
• System checks errors prior to submission
• ORS submits application once finalized
• Applications can be copied and edited for new FOA
• Add optional forms as required
• Preview application as pdf
• Track status of application via ASSIST or grants.gov

Financial Conflict of Interest (FCOI)

- Compliance with US policies is required, including FCOI disclosure by all investigators holding or applying for Public Health Services (PHS) funds.
- Investigators must submit FCOI disclosure forms:
  - At the time of application
  - At minimum, annually, within the term of an existing grant or sub-award
  - Within 30 days of any new significant FCOI within the term of an existing grant or sub-award
- Award recipients must complete NIH FCOI tutorial
- Updated FCOI required to release annual funds

FCOI Disclosure: https://www.uvic.ca/research/conduct/home/regapproval/index.php
Award Administration

• Notice of Grant Award (NGA) sent to Business Official
• NGAs issued annually upon approval of the Research Performance Progress Report (RPPR)
• Interim and final RPPR required
• Spending must normally stay within 25% for each category (contact Program Officer to confirm)
• Easy to request a one-year no-cost extension after award renewal; additional time must be approved by NIH
• Administrative supplements available to cover unexpected costs
• Funds can be transferred out of US

Tips for Applicants

• Check funding priorities for specific NIH Centres and Institutes
• Contact NIH Program Officers to discuss application
  – contacts for application submission, science/research, peer review and financial management on FOA
• Notify ORS of intent to apply and to obtain eraCommons ID if required
• Learn about funding priorities and review criteria
• Start early to gather required documents and information, especially when working with sub-sites
• Submit early to address potential errors ahead of the deadline

NIH grant writing tip sheets: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_tips.htm
Resources

- NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts:
  https://grants.nih.gov/funding/index.htm
- NIH Grants Policy Statement:
- Writing your application:
- Page limits:
- NIH Review Guidelines:
  https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/review_templates.htm
- Information for foreign applicants and grantees:
  https://grants.nih.gov/grants/foreign/index.htm