

Administrative Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research Careers

NICHD Supplemental Program Guidance for Development of Diversity Supplement Applications

Overview

NICHD diversity supplements to NIH awards are intended to promote development of the health-related workforce through many different career stages (Table 1). Diversity supplement applications are accepted three times per year for all career stages, as outlined in the notice of funding opportunity (NOFO) (Table 2).

Table 1. NICHD-Supported Career Stages and Time Periods for Diversity Supplements

Career-Stage Eligibility*	Maximum Length of Award
High School Student	1 year
Undergraduate Student	2 years
Post-Undergraduate Student	2 years
Post-Master’s Student	2 years
Predoctoral Student	2 years
Postdoctoral Fellow	2 years
Investigator	2 years

* Although NICHD awards supplements to students through faculty career stages, priority is given to highly meritorious applications that request support for post-undergraduate students, post-master’s students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and established investigators who are or become disabled. NICHD receives more applications than there are available funds to pay and utilizes the strength of the evidence in each application to inform the final decisions.

Table 2. NICHD Application Receipt Dates and Notifications

Receipt Date*	Funding Decision	Earliest Possible Start Date
September 5	December	January
January 5	April	May
May 5	July	August

*Applications submitted between the listed receipt dates will be reviewed in the subsequent cycle.

The following guidance is intended to provide applicants with the information necessary for development of an application. Potential applicants should always reach out to their program official (PO) in advance of submission for further guidance.

Step 1: Finding the NOFO

NIH publishes specific NOFOs for development of diversity supplement applications. NIH reissues the NOFOs on occasion and sometimes publishes important clarification notices. Therefore, always read the NOFO carefully to make sure it is current and watch for updates and clarifications.

As of June 2023, this is the current announcement:

[PA-23-189](#): Research Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (Admin Supp – Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Applicants should always check the announcement for updated reissues to ensure compliance with the current NOFO.

Step 2: Filling Out the Application

Applicants should carefully follow instructions in the NOFO, except for instances in which NICHD-specific program guidelines differ. NICHD program priorities and guidelines are provided in the following sections.

Pre-Application Submission Guidance

Prior to submitting a supplement request, applicants should review all NOFO and NICHD-specific guidelines. **Applicants should also contact the PO assigned to the parent grant in advance of submission to discuss the scope of the proposed research activities, the candidate's eligibility, and the budget, as well as to address all other pre- application questions.**

Important: NICHD only allows a single program director/principal investigator (PD/PI)/candidate pair two submissions total for a given career stage. Incomplete applications will not be reviewed and will not count toward the two allowable submission attempts. Applications will be considered incomplete if they are missing any of the following required components:

- Candidate biosketch
- Candidate eligibility statement signed by the institution

NICHD does allow a single PD/PI to submit multiple candidate applications. Each is reviewed separately on its own merits.

Preparing the Application

Prepare applications using the SF-424 Research and Related (R&R) forms, following instructions in the application guide and instructions included in the most current NOFO. The following list includes additional instructions and requirements for NICHD applications.

Every application must include:

- **R&R Cover Form:** Select “Revision” in the “Type of Application” field.
- **Research Plan Form:** Follow instructions for the “Research Strategy” section as described in the NOFO. This section must include a summary or abstract of the funded parent award or project. The remainder of the section should be organized using separate headings for “Research Plan,” “Career Development Plan,” and “Mentoring Plan.” Those categories parallel the criteria listed under [Review of Applications](#).
 - Applications must include a timeline for all career development activities.
 - The “Research Strategy” section should describe how supplement funding will prepare the candidate for the next career transition.
 - Plans to prepare the candidate for obtaining subsequent funding (e.g., fellowships, career awards, research grants) should be included.
 - If multiple mentors are involved in the candidate’s activities, the “Mentoring Plan” should describe the roles and coordination of the mentoring team.
- **Project Performance Site Locations Form:** Follow NOFO instructions.
- **Senior/Key Person Profile Form:** Follow NOFO instructions. Applications must list as senior/key persons the PD/PI of the parent grant, the supplement candidate, and any other individuals directly involved in activities related to the supplement, including all mentors or co-mentors. Do not include other senior/key persons from the parent project unless they are directly involved in the candidate’s research or training experience.

Applications must include a biosketch for all individuals listed on the Senior/Key Person Profile Form or described as mentors within the application.

Biosketches of mentors and other senior and key persons should provide evidence of past mentoring experience.

- Biosketches for high school, predoctoral (including undergraduates and post-baccalaureates), and postdoctoral candidates should follow SF-424 biosketch instructions, which require a section on scholastic performance with lists of courses and grades. Official transcripts should not be submitted.
- The personal statement of the candidate's biosketch must address any sources of current support as indicated in the NOFO.
- **Prior Public Health Service (PHS)-Funding Eligibility:** Follow NOFO instructions and review the following additional NICHD-specific guidance.
 - Candidates already supported by the parent award **may not be removed from current support** for purposes of obtaining a diversity supplement.
 - Candidates who are supported by institutional training grants (e.g., T32, K12, KL2), individual fellowships, or other awards with defined appointment periods **may not be transferred to supplemental support prior to completion of the expected period** of training on the program.
 - Candidates with previous or current PHS support are not eligible to be supported by the diversity supplement **for the same career stage**.

Please note the following *potential* exceptions:

- If the candidate is listed on a grant's research performance progress report as having effort due to *unpaid* work (e.g., summer internship), they may be eligible to apply for support for the same career stage; this should be justified and explained clearly in the application.
- If a candidate is supported by an institutional training/career development grant that has a defined, limited period of support ending before the proposed supplement begins, they may be eligible to apply for support for the same career stage, with clear justification for why the supplement is additionally needed. Contact the PO before applying for verification. Candidates can also send an email with questions to nichd_divresuppcoord@mail.nih.gov. The PD/PI and authorized organizational representative (AOR) should provide documentation of this policy in the application.

- Candidates with previous or current PHS funding are eligible to be supported by the supplement on a different career stage, even if it is through the same parent grant.
 - NICHD considers undergraduate and postbaccalaureate as distinct career stages. NICHD may consider master's and post-master's as distinct career stages, with appropriate justification.
 - *Considerations:* In many cases, it might not be in the candidate's best interest to continue to be supported by the same project across career stages and could impact the merit review. Applications that are supporting a candidate at different career stages through the same parent grant should justify this decision in their application and clearly describe the added benefit to the candidate. It should be explicitly clear in the application how the candidate's level of responsibility, research training, and career development activities and goals will be qualitatively and substantively different from the activities and career development training they received in the previous career stage when they received PHS funding.
- **Budget Forms (e.g., R&R Budget, PHS 398 Training Budget):** Follow instructions in the NOFO. Only include funds requested for the additional supplement activities. Budgetary guidelines and limits are described in the NOFO.
 - Budgets must be well justified and may not exceed the NICHD maximum length of support for a given career stage, as outlined in [Table 1](#).
 - Funding for the supplement is contingent on continued funding of the parent grant and cannot extend beyond the current competitive segment of the parent grant.
 - For investigator-level candidates, salary and fringe benefits should be consistent with the level of support provided by NICHD Career Development Awards. Salary support of up to \$100,000, plus fringe benefits, will be provided based on a required minimum of 75 percent effort.
 - Postdoctoral researchers will be paid at the appropriate National Research Service Award stipend level.
 - Budgets may not allow for research costs beyond costs allowed for "supplies and travel" by the NOFO.

- **R&R Other Project Information Form**

- **Assurances:** Follow NOFO instructions for institutional review board or institutional animal care and use committee approval, as appropriate. Note that applications may not propose that the candidate independently lead a clinical trial, a clinical trial feasibility study, or an ancillary clinical trial. However, applicants are permitted to propose research experience in a clinical trial led by a mentor or co-mentor.
- **Candidate Eligibility Statement:** A formal statement must be provided by the institution that 1) certifies candidate eligibility for a diversity supplement as outlined in the NOFO; the statement should indicate if a candidate meets more than one of the NOFO eligibility criteria, and 2) specifically affirms that the candidate is a U.S. citizen or has U.S. permanent resident status.

The required candidate eligibility statement should be signed by an AOR or signing official (SO) and included under “Other Attachments” with the R&R Other Project Information Form. Neither the candidate nor PI of the parent grant can provide this certification unless the PI is also an SO for the institution. Applications that are missing the statement or do not have appropriate certification/endorsement will be considered incomplete and not reviewed. Applicants should carefully read the instructions in Section IV of the NOFO that addresses this.

Other NICHD requirements for supplement applications are as follows:

- Applications may only request support for a *single career stage* with a clear statement of what the supported career stage will be.
- Applications must propose a candidate project within scope of the awarded parent grant specific aims. If you are unsure if the proposed project is within scope, contact your PO.
- For any proposed site other than the grantee institution, the consortium or subcontract must have already been established and not added solely to be able to request a diversity supplement.
- NICHD will not award supplements to non-NICHD parent awards and will not allow a transfer of the supplement between institutions or candidates.

Note: These requirements are essential to the review of diversity supplement applications. Lack of clarity in responding to these requirements or missing information may be considered important weaknesses and/or result in a low program priority designation. The institutional AOR should be aware of the NICHD requirements prior to final application preparation and submission.

Submitting the Application

- Applications must be submitted through Grants.gov as outlined under “Application Submission” in the NOFO. Applicants should identify the most current NOFO and select the correct forms before preparing an application.
- Applications submitted between the published NICHD receipt dates will be reviewed in the subsequent cycle.
- PD/PIs must submit separate applications for each candidate. Single application requests to support more than one candidate will not be reviewed or considered for funding.
- PDs/PIs may only submit requests to train candidates for a single career stage. Overlapping career stage requests (i.e., undergraduate to graduate transition) in a single application will not be considered for funding.
- A diversity application for a candidate that was not awarded with the first submission may only be submitted one additional time for NICHD consideration. **Note:** Per [PA-23-189](#), each application is technically considered “new” even when it is revised and resubmitted for the same candidate. Applicants should consult with the PO of the parent project to address concerns of the prior review.

Review of Applications

For each fiscal year, NICHD will administratively review diversity supplement applications submitted for the three due dates outlined in [Table 2](#). The review will consider the strength of the evidence provided in the application to address each of the review criteria specified in the NOFO as well as the following criteria. A key factor is how supplement funding will prepare the candidate for the next career transition.

Applications will be scored on the following criteria:

Candidate

- The candidate describes in a personal statement (in candidate biosketch or application body) a clear interest in science, previous experience, and/or a career goal that will be strengthened or furthered by the aims of the supplement.
 - **Note:** For high school and undergraduate candidates, it is acceptable to make the case that the supplement will provide experience that might foster an interest in a research career.
- The proposed supplement activities align with the candidate’s stated career goals.

Research Plan

- The candidate's proposed research activities are clearly outlined and within scope for one or more awarded specific aims of the parent grant. The PD/PI has identified the aim(s) that align with the candidate's proposed research activities.
- The candidate's role in the proposed research activities is clearly described and matches the experience and career level of the candidate.
- The application has detailed how the research project will provide *new knowledge and skills* for the candidate and support their career goals.
- For faculty, a convincing description of how the proposed activities will prepare the candidate for an independent research career.

Career Development Plan

- The plan is tailored to the candidate to address gaps and/or expand research skills and career building skills (such as grant-writing, networking, teaching, etc.).
- The plan provides details of the skills to be acquired and milestones for progress.
- A timeline is provided for the research and career development activities that aligns with the career stage and career goals of the applicant.
- The application clearly outlines how the plan will help the candidate make the transition to the next stage of training.
 - **Note:** For high school and college students, the plan may outline a broader future benefit.

Mentoring Plan

- The mentoring experience and track record of all mentors and co-mentors is detailed and appropriate for the candidate's training. Example outcomes of prior mentees are described.
- There is a detailed mentoring plan that is aligned with the specific needs of the candidate to prepare for their next career stage.
- The frequency and focus of meetings with the candidate are appropriate for the candidate's stage and career goals.

- If multiple mentors are involved in the candidate's activities, the mentoring plan describe an effective process for guiding the candidate and coordinating the mentoring team.

Additional Foreign Components Guidance

- There is a clear plan of interaction at any remote site.
- There is a mentor at the site.
- The mentor at the primary institution is substantially involved with training.

Funding Decisions and Timeline

In general, NICHD will make funding decisions within approximately 12 weeks of the published receipt dates. The PO of the parent grant will notify PDs/PIs of the funding decision and will provide feedback on applications that are not approved/awarded.

Supplements are administratively reviewed by NICHD staff; thus, review status updates are not provided in Grants.gov. Likewise, written critiques will not be provided to applicants. Summaries of the administrative review will be provided to the PO. Applicants who intend to revise and resubmit the application should consult with the PO to address any concerns or weaknesses.

Additional Points to Consider

- Supplements are one of many possible options for mentoring and developing careers of candidates who are underrepresented in the health-related research workforce. Therefore, the PD/PI should consider all potential sources, federal and non-federal, of support for a candidate. Graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty trainees should be encouraged to submit independent applications for fellowships (e.g., F30, F31, F32), career development awards (K awards), or research project grant applications as appropriate.
- The supplement is intended to provide tailored research and training experiences to the candidate that foster their success and career progression. The application should be tailored to the candidate's needs and should state clearly what they will gain. Being a member of a strong laboratory and attending group meetings is not considered sufficient support.
- Supplement applications are expected to be planned and written as a collaboration between the candidate and mentor(s).