Participating NIGMS Staff

- **Dr. Michele McGuirl,** Acting Director, Division for Research Capacity Building

- **Dr. Krishan Arora,** Chief, Networks and Development Programs Branch

- **Dr. Tony Beck,** Program Director, SEPA Program Co-Lead

- **Dr. Yang Zhou,** Program Director, SEPA Program Co-Lead

- **Christy Leake,** Team Leader, Grants Administration Branch

Webinar Information

- This webinar is being recorded

- The webinar video and slides will be available on the NIGMS website

- Please type your questions in the chat box throughout the webinar

- We will answer the questions after the presentation

Outline of Today's Webinar

- SEPA Program Overview

- Application Preparation

- The Review Process

- Human Subjects

- Budget - Allowable and Unallowable Costs

SEPA Program Overview

Purpose of the SEPA Program

SEPA supports educational activities for **pre-kindergarten to grade 12 (P-12)** to ensure that students and teachers from **all communities and regions of the country** have the opportunity to pursue studies in **science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).**

SEPA also supports **informal science education (ISE)** projects for the general public that are conducted in non-classroom venues such as science centers, museums and libraries.

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PI Eligibility

- The PI must devote a **minimum of 2.0 person months** per year. Up to **4.8 person months** PI effort per year can be requested with justification

- **Multiple PI** applications: each PI must devote a minimum of 2.0 person months per year. Up to 4.8 person months per year can be requested for the **combined** MPI effort

- A PD/PI with an active SEPA award is eligible to submit a new SEPA application as long as the new SEPA project is distinct from the active project and there is no more than six months overlap between the end date of the current SEPA award and the potential start date of the new SEPA award

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Institutional Eligibility

- **Eligible Institutions:** colleges, universities, institutes, Tribal entities, non-profits, for-profit organizations, museums, science centers, Public/Private/Charter schools, professional societies, etc.

- An institution with an active SEPA award is eligible to submit new applications in different scientific disciplines

- Foreign institutions are not eligible

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Award Information

- Up to 5 years duration

- Maximum per year: $250,000 in Direct Costs

- 8% Facilities and Administrative Costs

- Not renewable

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Supported SEPA Activities

Eligible Topics:
- Any area of science within the NIH mission
- The scientific interests of participating NIH ICOs are in the NOFO

SEPA focuses on two key STEM areas:
- Classroom-based projects for P-12 students and teachers
- Informal science education (ISE) projects conducted in venues such as science centers, museums, and libraries

Projects that support quantitative and computational skills development are strongly encouraged

Supported SEPA Activities (Cont'd)

SEPA projects may employ one or more of these activities in a given project:

- Courses for skills development
- Research experiences
- Mentoring activities
- Curriculum or methods development
- Outreach

Application Due Dates

FY	Due Date	Scientific Merit Review	Advisory Council Review	Earliest Start Date
2024	June 7, 2024	November 2024	January 2025	April 2025
2025	June 6, 2025	November 2025	January 2026	April 2026

* Resubmission is not allowed

Application Preparation

Advice to Applicants

- Study the entire NOFO carefully.

- Complete all the required registrations for the submitting organization.

- Pay attention to Section V - review criteria ([Section V](#)) – reviewers' critique templates contain these criteria/questions.

Important Contacts

Who to contact and when:

- Before submission and after the Summary Statement is released: Program Officer **(PO)** and Grants Management Specialist **(GMS)**

- After Submission and before the Review Meeting: Scientific Review Officer **(SRO).**

Program Officer (PO)
Tony Beck, Ph.D., beckl@mail.nih.gov
Yang Zhou, Ph.D., yang.zhou@nih.gov
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Scientific Review Officer (SRO)
Maqsood Wani, Ph.D. wanimaqs@csr.nih.gov
Center for Scientific Review (CSR)

Grants management Specialist (GMS)
Christy Leake, christy.leake@nih.gov
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Application Preparation

Create an eRA Commons Account
https://www.era.nih.gov/register-accounts/create-and-edit-an- account.htm

- Understanding eRA Commons Account
- Register in eRA Commons
- Manage Institution Profile
- Access eRA Modules via login.gov
- Create and Edit an Account
- Account Roles

Application Preparation (Cont'd)

- Study SEPA NOFO

- Visit [SEPA Community website (External)](#)

  - Search by

    - Topic

    - Target Audience

    - Applicant Organization

  - SEPA Projects by Funding Year

  - Annual SEPA PI Conference Reports

Project Narrative

- Should discuss the **broader impact potential** for the proposed SEPA project to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired workforce diversity, societal and health literacy outcomes

Research Education Plan (REP)

- Clear goals and anticipated outcomes
- A [Gantt Chart](#) that visualizes overall project plan, timelines and the relationship between various activities
- Project alignment with the practices, crosscutting concepts, and core ideas of the [Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)](#)
- How the [Logic Model](#) depicts the relationship between your program's activities and its intended effects
- Strategies to develop critical thinking skills
- Cultural relevance to the target audience(s)
- Input from the students, teachers, community and other stakeholders
- Potential to build a sustainable STEM education capacity for the community
- Potential for replication or adaptation at different locations or institutions

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Additional Parts of the REP

- **Recruitment Plan to Enhance Diversity** - required

- **Plan for Instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research** - required

- **Evaluation Plan -** required

- **Dissemination Plan** - required

- **Institutional Environment and Commitment** – required

- **Advisory Committee - optional**
  - If proposed, discuss the composition, roles and responsibilities of the committee, desired expertise of committee members, and frequency of committee meetings.
  - <u>Advisory committee members should not be identified or contacted prior to receiving an award.</u>

Other Key Parts of the Application

- **Facilities & Other Resources**: Describe the educational environment, including the facilities, laboratories, participating departments, computer services, and any other resources to be used in the development and implementation of the proposed program.

- **Letters of Support:**
  - Letter of Institutional Commitment - required
  - Commitment of partners and/or collaborators – strongly encouraged

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Tips to Avoid Administrative Withdrawal

NOTE: Application will be withdrawn prior to peer review if improper Appendix or Hyperlinks are used, or if any required attachments and content are missing.

APPENDIX: Do not use the Appendix to circumvent page limits. Follow all instructions for the Appendix as described in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide.

Hyperlinks and URLs
- Are not permitted in the Research Plan/Approach
- They may be used in citing relevant publications in biosketches and publication lists.
- NIH policy on the use of hyperlinks is articulated in the NIH SF424 (R&R) Application Guide reads: Hyperlinks and URLs may not be used to provide information necessary to application review.

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Post-Submission Materials

- After submission but <u>at least 30 days prior</u> to the review meeting, some material may be sent to the SRO for the panel to consider. There are strict guidelines for this.

- General guidelines for preparing post-submission materials https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-19-083.html

Review Process

Review Process: Step 1 – Administrative Review

- **All applications go through Administrative Review by NIGMS POs and CSR**

- **All applications deemed non-compliant/non-responsive/ineligible are withdrawn. To avoid this:**

    o Read and follow the **NOFO (PAR-23-137) instructions**

    o Make sure all PIs are eligible

    o Make sure the submitting organization(s) are eligible

    o Apply a few days prior to the deadline, check your application, and make corrections if needed

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Review Process: Step 2 – Scientific Review

- Applications are assigned to a Special Emphasis Panel (SEP)

- **Reviewer Assignments**: Three reviewers are assigned to each application. At least 2 will give full comments with preliminary scores for each review criterion, the 3rd reviewer might only provide a summary. All 3 give an overall preliminary score.

- **Review criteria:** Significance, Investigators, Innovation, Approach/Research Plan, Environment

- The panel discusses an application and then each panelist provides an individual score. These are averaged and multiplied by 10 to give the **Final Impact Score**.

  - Panelists may decide not to discuss some applications but the decision must be unanimous; typically ~ 50% are discussed. The applicant still receives comments/preliminary scores from the 3 assigned reviewers.

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Review Scoring

Overall Impact:
The likelihood that a project will have a <u>sustained</u> and <u>powerful</u> influence on science (and/or clinical practice and/or technological developments?)

Overall Impact	High	Medium	Low
Score	1 2 3	4 5 6	7 8 9

Evaluating Overall Impact:
Consider the 5 criteria: significance, investigator, innovation, approach, environment (weighted based on reviewer's judgment)

e.g. Applications are addressing a problem of <u>high</u> importance in the field. May have some or no technical weaknesses.

e.g. Applications may be addressing a problem of <u>high</u> importance in the field, but weaknesses in the criteria bring down the overall impact to medium.

e.g. Applications may be addressing a problem of <u>moderate</u> importance in the field, with some or no technical weaknesses

e.g. Applications may be addressing a problem of <u>moderate</u>/<u>high</u> importance in the field, but weaknesses in the criteria bring down the overall impact to low.

e.g. Applications may be addressing a problem of <u>low</u> or <u>no</u> importance in the field, with some or no technical weaknesses.

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Additional Considerations for Review Scoring

ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA (<u>**considered**</u> **in an overall impact score):**

- Protections for Human Subjects
- Vertebrate Animals
- Biohazards
- Recruitment Plan to Enhance Diversity
- Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research – Including Laboratory Safety

ADDITIONAL REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS (<u>Not considered</u> in overall impact score)
- Budget and Period of Support

Peer Review Integrity

- Do not contact any reviewers listed on the roster regarding any aspects of the review of your application before or after the review

- This is violating the NIH confidentiality and conflict of interest rules and can lead to a deferral of your application

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Human Subjects

Human Subjects Research

Research involving a living individual about whom:

- Data are obtained/used/studied/analyzed through interaction/intervention.
- Interaction with subjects for the collection of biospecimens or data (including health or clinical data, surveys, focus groups or observation of behavior).
- Examples:
  - Testing a new educational technique
  - Conducting a focus group
  - Conducting a survey
  - Interviewing
  - https://grants.nih.gov/sites/default/files/human-subjects-research-infographic.pdf

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Human Subjects - Helpful Hints

- Most SEPA applications should be **not HS Research or Exempt HS Research**
- Check with your institutional review board (IRB) and Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) Resources prior to submission

Valuable NIH resources:
- [Decision Tool:](#) Am I Doing HS Research?
- [HS Research Tools Page](#)
- [Training and Resources](#)

- Note: Program evaluations that use Randomized Control Trial (RCT) methodology are NOT clinical trials.

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Budget - Allowable and Unallowable Costs

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Grants Management Basics – General Guidance

- Organizations may be a subcontract on another SEPA award as long as the subcontract does not exceed 20% of the direct costs requested

- Competing applications with a detailed budget can continue to request cost-of-living/inflationary increases in accordance with institutional policy

- Requests associated solely with inflationary increases will be eliminated from the awarded budget for competing awards

- Requests associated with special needs (e.g., equipment, added personnel or increased effort) will continue to be considered

- Useful link: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/financial/fiscal_policy_faq_.htm

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Grants Management Basics - Personnel Costs

- Individuals designing, directing, and implementing the research education program may request salary and fringe benefits appropriate for the person months devoted to the program

- Salaries requested may not exceed the levels commensurate with the institution's policy for similar positions and may not exceed the congressionally mandated cap

- If mentoring interactions are considered a regular part of an individual's academic duties, then any costs associated with the mentoring are not allowable costs from grant funds

Grants Management Basics - Participant Costs

- Participants are those individuals who are involved in the proposed research education activity

- Participants may be paid if specifically required for the proposed research education program and sufficiently justified

- Participant costs must be itemized in the proposed budget

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Grants Management Basics - Meals

- Allowable for subjects under study, or where specifically approved as part of the project activity

- Meal charges cannot be duplicated in participants' per diem or subsistence allowances

- When certain meals are an integral and necessary part of a meeting or conference i.e., a working meal where business is transacted, grant funds may be used

- Recurring business meetings, such as staff meetings, cannot use grant funds for meals

Please see section 7.9.1 of the NIH Grants Policy Statement

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Grants Management Basics - Best Practices

- Ensure costs are reasonable, allocable, necessary and consistently treated

- Provide adequate budget justifications to explain the relevance of costs to the proposed SEPA project

- Research proposed costs in advance – check with your Office of Sponsored Programs, or equivalent office for institutional cost policies

Grants Management Basics - Program-Related Expenses

- Consultant costs, equipment, supplies, travel for key persons, and other program-related expenses may be included in the proposed budget

- These expenses must be justified and must not duplicate items generally available at the applicant institution

- Funds to support travel to the SEPA PI conference should be requested in the budget

Allowable and Unallowable Costs

Allowable Costs:
- Teachers and students participating in a SEPA project can be <u>compensated for their participation</u> in the project
- <u>Incentive payments</u> to volunteers or participants in a grant-supported project are allowable

Unallowable Costs:
- <u>Stipends</u> are not allowable on R25 awards
- <u>Entertainment</u> is not allowable on NIH awards
- <u>Gifts</u> are unallowable on all NIH awards
- <u>Promotional Items</u> are not allowable on NIH awards

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Grants Management Basics - Questionable Costs

- Honorarium – not allowable when it is used to confer distinction on a speaker

- General Supplies – only costs directly related to the grant and/or project are allowable as direct costs

All costs must be allowable, reasonable, allocable, necessary and be accorded consistent treatment

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Thank You!