Academic Research Enhancement Award (AREA) Program

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- Overview of AREA (R15) program
- How R15s differ from other Rs
- Strategies for success
  - Institutional level
  - PI level

Goals of AREA program

- Support meritorious research
- Expose students to research
- Strengthen the research environment of the institution

Purpose of AREA Program

- Support small-scale research projects in the biomedical and behavioral sciences
- conducted by faculty and students
- in educational institutions that have not been major recipients of NIH research grant funds

Key features

- Project period is limited up to 3 years
- Direct cost limited to $300,000 over entire project period
- Multiple PIs are allowed, if all eligible
- Research Strategy limited to 12 pages
- Grants are renewable
- Preliminary data not required but can be provided

Application logistics

- Funded through the R15 grant mechanism
  - Program Announcement (PA) Number: PA-13-313
- Receipt dates
  - Standard application deadlines: February 25, June 25, and October 25
  - AIDS-related research deadlines: May 7, September 7, and January 7
- All NIH ICs participate in the PA-13-313 except FIC and NCATS
  - Check NIH Guide for one-time RFAs
  - Grants.nih.gov/grants/guide

Differences between R15 & other Rs

- Unique review criteria
- Unique application requirements
- Eligibility
  - Institution
  - PI

Some review criteria are unique

- PA-12-006 & PA-13-313
- Significance
  - Strengthen research environment
  - Expose students to research
- Investigator
  - Experience supervising students in research?
- Approach
  - Can project stimulate students' interest so they consider biomedical/behavioral science career?
- Environment
  - Well qualified students available?
  - Have or likely will students pursue biomedical/ behavioral science careers?

Overall

- “Important scientific contribution”
- Provide research opportunities for students
- Strengthen research environment

Addition to PI biosketch

- Summary of previous/current experience supervising students in research
- Specify which pubs/patents involved students under their supervision

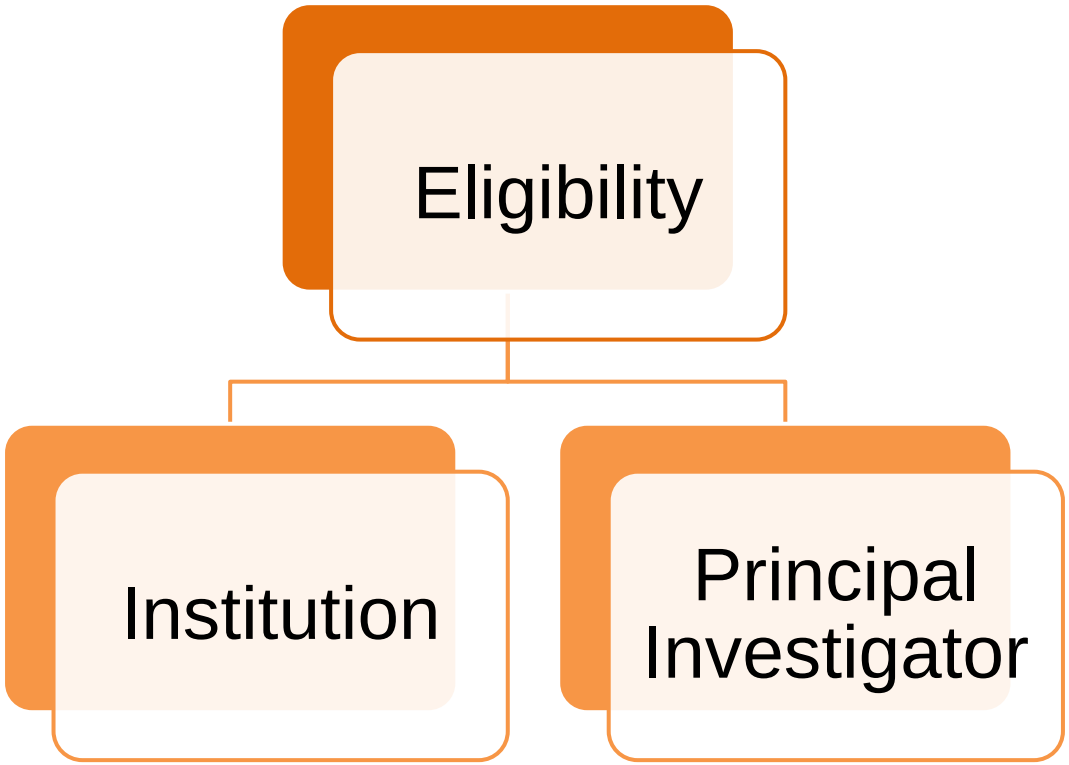
Additions to Facilities

- For institution or qualifying College/School
- Profile of students
- Estimate of # who obtained Bachelor & went on to doctoral degree in last 5 years
- Special characteristics that make it appropriate for 3 goals of AREA
- Impact of R15 on PI & institution
- Any institutional support
- Limited use of special facilities elsewhere

Changes to R15 over time

- Now considered career-long, no longer stepping stone to R01
- Renewable
- Now clear incorporation of R15 goals in review criteria
- Now softened language about expected scientific impact

Eligibility



Eligibility = applicant institution and PI only

Eligibility ≠ collaborators

Institution eligibility

- US institutions only
- Baccalaureate or advanced degree in biomedical or behavioral science
- Degree granting & accredited
- Receives less than $6 million per year in NIH support in 4 out of last 7 years

There is no “eligible” list

- Ineligible list is on AREA Program website
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area_ineligible.htm
  - “College” is called “School”
  - City listed does not necessarily mean that campus only
  - Name might not be what appears on your application
- “Other Academic” = sum of everything that is not an R15-defined Health Professional School

PI eligibility

- Primary appointment at eligible institution
- OK:
  - Also serve as consultant (e.g., Key Personnel) on another grant
- Not OK:
  - Also serve as PI of other NIH research grants at time of award
  - Also serve as Multiple PI on another NIH research grant at time of award

FAQ: ineligible collaborators?

- Can I have a collaborator who is not at an AREA-eligible institution, at home campus or another site?
- Eligibility answer: Yes
- Merit answer: ***But*** keep the unique goals and criteria of the R15 in mind
  - No one can predict what level of involvement will be seen as counter to the R15 goals
  - Pre-PA-12-006, unique attributes not included as strongly in review criteria

Strategies for success

- **Institution**
- **Investigator**
- **Both**

Build a vital research environment

- Understand the NIH extramural research program
  - Know guidelines, deadlines, submission & correction process, and review criteria
  - Support the “grants office”
- Make a commitment to establishing an environment in which research can succeed
  - Start up packages for equipment and supplies
  - Pilot grants, student research grants
  - Credit for student involvement in research
- Consider the importance of collaborative research in establishing a successful research environment

…Build a vital research environment

- Do not pressure investigators to apply if their projects are not ready for peer review
  - Quality over quantity; submit best application
  - ~~"Get some feedback from the reviewers"~~
- Help investigators with the "Facilities and Other Resources" section of application
  - Profile of student body
  - Description of the institution and research environment
  - Letter of institutional commitment to research project
  - Maintain as resource & revise per Summary Statements

Strategies of Successful PIs

- Include a collaborator or consultant if you don't have the necessary expertise or resources
  - Understand the review criteria and the review criteria questions
    - Each question should be addressed in the application
  - In A1, respond thoroughly and diplomatically to all of the reviewer comments
- AREA grant is research award, not training award
  - Focus on hands-on research not course work
  - Describe PI's role in research & supervision

More Strategies of Successful PIs

- Address the AREA-specific programmatic goals in the application
  - Support meritorious research
    - Research should contribute to the field
    - Results should be publishable
  - Expose students to research
    - Profile of available and former students at the institution
    - Experience of the investigator in working with students
    - How students will be incorporated into the research project
    - How students will benefit from this research experience
  - Strengthen the research environment
    - The suitability of the institution for an award
    - The impact the AREA grant will have on the institution

Advice from PUIs

- Involve first years & sophomores
- Consider a tech, given academic year fluctuations
- Assess what will be crucial to keeping your research moving during fluctuations
  - Part time technician
  - Seasonal technician
  - Duties for existing employee (teaching, lab maintenance)
  - Shared technician for several labs/departments (recent graduates)

There is no winning formula

- No one can give specifics of what will score well
- Do not treat a successful [or not] application as an iron-clad template [of what not to do]
  - How many students
  - How many papers
  - What % of a collaborator
  - What % of special facilities
  - What amount or type of institutional support
  - What type of environment

News & resources

- AREA Program evaluation underway
  - Assessing Program's success in meeting its goals
  - Surveys & interviews by Westat
- AREA Program Facebook page
  - Like us on Facebook
  - https://www.facebook.com/NIHAreaProgram
- AREA Program FAQs
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area_faq.htm
- AREA mailbox
  - R151@mail.nih.gov