Good News! We’ve just posted video from our Nov. 6 Meet the Experts in NIH Peer Review for R01 Grant Applicants on our webinar Web page.

Please find below answers to questions we didn’t get to answer during the live webinar and also a clarification on guidance for deciding whether or not to apply for a R21 or R01 grant.

We wish you well in your work at your University and wish you a very Happy and Productive New Year!

The CSR Webinar Team

Clarification:

When considering applying for either an R21 or R01 grant, PIs should let the nature and scale of their proposed work be the driver for that decision; i.e., R21s are two-year grants for projects that are often more exploratory in nature, while R01s are larger grants for up to five years and are more demanding in terms of providing preliminary data that support project feasibility, hence trying to shoehorn a project suitable for one grant mechanism into the other typically doesn’t work to the PI’s favor. While submitting an R01 application can be daunting for a New Investigator (NI) who has yet to secure NIH support, and advice on the street may be to “start small with an R21”, the NIH and CSR have taken steps to help ease these concerns, namely by a) clustering R01 applications from NIs when reviewed in study sections, b) by taking into account the career stage of the PI during those reviews, and c) by the NIH Institutes and Centers committing to funding an appropriate percentage of these applications. Therefore, the PI is best off figuring out (perhaps with advice from an appropriate Program representative) which mechanism best suits the work they intend to propose and then follow that lead.

Is it appropriate to insert the Fringe Benefits and Indirect Cost Rate in the Modular Budget Personnel Justification?

No. Fringe benefits and indirect costs are supported through the indirect cost support NIH provides to your university.

How much help can one usually get from a program officer?

Program Officers provide technical assistance before an application is submitted and after peer review. Dr. Desmond said that, in her experience, pre-submission assistance can include( 1) assessment/feedback on fit of the proposed Aims with an Institute’s mission, strategic plan, and/or research priorities; (2) discussion about most appropriate FOA for the proposed research and timeline for submission; (3) feedback about potential study sections; and (4) possibly discussion of NIH policies that will affect the proposed research (e.g. the new NIH data rigor and transparency policy). After peer review, it’s appropriate to ask the assigned Program Officer to discuss the summary statement and the PI’s plan for revising the application for a resubmission application.

If I have published the preliminary data, shall I represent them in the proposal or refer reviewers to the paper?
Preliminary data that have been published don’t typically qualify as “preliminary” any more. In any event, if a figure from a publication (be it old or new) is going to really drive home a point that’s critical to supporting the feasibility of the proposed work, then the PI should consider including it. What’s important is to make sure that such figures provide the appropriate reference as well; reviewers generally don’t take kindly to attempts to pass off published work as “preliminary,” whether done intentionally or not.

**ECR Webinar**

To increase our chances of serving as an ECR, should we just send updates to our CV once every 6 months? Or whenever we get a significantly higher number of publications or awards?

Yes, it is helpful to keep your CV updated in our system. We don’t have a preference on how often you update your CV. However, given that there are review meetings every 4 months, it may be more advantageous to update your database profile when you get a significant number of publications or awards.

Do I need to make a direct contact with a SRO of a specific study section to serve as an ECR? How do I get in touch if the SRO’s email address is missing, based on what I can see from CSR website?

You can contact the SRO of a specific study section directly but please keep in mind that SROs choose ECRs to serve on the study section based on the type of expertise needed to review the applications received each review round. If the SROs email or phone number is not available on our website, you may contact the Chief of the Integrated Review Group (IRG) that oversees your target study section(s). The Chief can forward your email or call to the SRO you want to contact.

Do you not recommend submitting the first R01 grant together with another Co-PI? I understand that I will lose my early-investigator status. But if I get the award, will it count against me when I seek another grant with another Co-PI?

We would discourage new investigators from submitting an application with a Co-PI unless the Co-PI is more of a peer. If a senior PI is a CO-PI and your research is a success, the senior PI would likely get most of the credit. If your research needs the expertise of a senior scientist, it is better to engage him/her as a consultant or collaborator.

If I have a K award without any R21 and R01, am I still considered a new investigator in applying for R01?

You can still be a new investigator if you have a K award.

How are statisticians used in study sections?

Statisticians who serve on study sections are primarily used to validate the approaches proposed by the applicants.

Can a PI submit R15 and R21 to same study section?

You can do this, but reviewers may not be seen it in a particularly favorable light. R15 applications are designed for part-time researchers, while submitting an R21 suggests you are really seeking more.