

# PLANNING YOUR FIRST APPLICATION: TOP 5 TIPS

November 2, 2021

Jennifer Alvidrez, PhD, ODP

Tanya Hoodbhoy, PhD, NIGMS

Karen Kehl, PhD, NINR

Paula Goodwin, PhD, OER (moderator)



**National Institutes of Health**

*Office of Extramural Research*

# TIP #1: FIND AN NIH INSTITUTE OR CENTER (IC) HOME FOR YOUR APPLICATION

- Identify ICs that support research/training in your topic area
  - Use Matchmaker tool in NIH RePORTER: <https://reporter.nih.gov/>
  - Identify by searching NIH websites: <https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-institute-center-contact-information>
    - Browse strategic plans, portfolio areas, research priorities
  - Use NIH Guide to identify relevant Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs):  
<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html#/>



# TIP #2: CONTACT A PROGRAM OFFICIAL (PO)

- Contact relevant POs listed on FOAs, IC websites, or in NIH RePORTER Matchmaker
  - Most POs prefer to be contacted by email rather than a “cold call”
  - Share your Specific Aims/brief project description in advance
    - Helps PO assess “mission-relevance” and fit with FOA
    - May facilitate follow-on discussions
  - Initiate contact early in the application process
  - You may talk to several POs before deciding where to submit



# TIP #3: READ AND UNDERSTAND THE FOA

- Confirm which ICs are participating
- Identify eligibility & budget restrictions
- Read the background section to understand priorities
- Read the responsiveness criteria, application instructions, and review criteria to understand requirements and expectations
- Contact appropriate FOA contacts with any questions
  - PO = programmatic questions
  - Grants management = budget or grants policy questions

See: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/prepare-to-apply-and-register/understand-funding-opportunities.htm>



National Institutes of Health

Office of Extramural Research

# TIP #4: GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR APPLICATION DRAFT

- Check with the assigned Program Officer (Scientific Contact) for feedback on any revised Specific Aims
- Use institutional resources for finding internal reviewers and/or setting up mock reviews
- Check out resources from professional organizations for external review
- Use your professional network to find trustworthy people to give you feedback prior to submission



# TIP #5: DOUBLE CHECK THE TECHNICAL DETAILS

- Check the FOA and (if applicable) Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) for any last-minute changes
- Check the application deadline – submit a few days early
  - View the submitted application for accuracy – *If you cannot view it, NIH cannot review it*
    - Verify correct FOA and NOSI (if applicable)
    - Verify total budget is within limits of FOA and IC
  - If there are any warnings or identified errors with the submission, address those issues **before the application deadline** (5pm local time for your organization)

See: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/due-dates-and-submission-policies/submission-policies.htm>

