

NINDS Announces Modifications to Special Council Review Policy

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Key Dates

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Related Announcements

None

Issued by

National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke ([NINDS](#))

Purpose

This Notice announces modifications to the Special Council Review (SCR) policy, which pertains to well-funded Program Director(s)/Principal Investigator(s) [PD(s)/PI(s)] submitting applications to NINDS. The new policy: (1) lowers the funding threshold that requires special review of a pending application by the National Advisory Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NANDS) Council and; (2) sets a more stringent payline for pending applications that cause a PD/PI to exceed this threshold.

Background

In September 2012, NIH implemented the SCR [policy](#), whereby Advisory Councils were instructed to provide additional scrutiny of new and renewal applications from investigators already receiving \$1.0M or more in direct cost NIH Research Project Grant (RPG) funding. The 2012 NIH policy recognized that institute-specific variations of the general policy could be developed in consultation with individual Councils. The NANDS Council discussed the NIH policy at its September 2017 and February 2018 meetings, and approved the modified policy described here. The goals of this policy are: (1) to permit the Institute to fund a larger, more diverse pool of researchers and (2) to ensure that PIs have sufficient bandwidth to oversee rigorous research and effective mentorship in their laboratories.

Policy

Effective with applications under funding consideration at the January 2019 meeting of the NANDS Council, NINDS will refine the Special Council Review policy and procedures for support of research from well-funded investigators. Under the new policy, a well-funded investigator is defined as an individual with NIH research support exceeding \$1M in direct costs at the time of the Council meeting, including the pending application. For the purposes of this policy, only research support for which the investigator is the PI or Co-PI will be considered. All competing applications from well-funded investigators with primary assignment to NINDS (with exceptions noted below) will be subject to a percentile payline that is ½ of the NINDS

payline for the Council round in question (<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/Funding/About-Funding/NINDS-Funding-Strategy>); if the payline is an odd number, the SCR payline will be rounded down to the next integer. For questions about applications that are not percentiled, applicants should contact the individual noted below for further information. Exceptions to this policy will be rare, and will be determined after review by NINDS staff, the NINDS Council, and NINDS leadership.

In contrast to the existing SCR policy, competing applications for P01s, Centers, and other Multi-Component RPGs will be included in this policy. Multi-PD/PI projects will also be subject to the policy if one or more of the PD/PIs has NIH research support exceeding \$1.0M inclusive of the pending application. Applications that will be excluded from this policy include those intended to support training, conferences, core facilities, and research resources. Applications submitted in response to SBIR/STTR solicitations and to a small number of specially designated Funding Opportunity Announcements will also be excluded.

In identifying well-funded investigators, active NIH research support will be considered except awards that support training, conferences, core facilities, research resources, and SBIR/STTR activities. An individual PD/PI's financial allocation on Multi-PD/PI and multi-component projects will be used to determine that individual's level of support. Grants that are in a no-cost extension and single year competitive and administrative supplements will not be included in this determination.

Factors that may contribute to a funding recommendation beyond the SCR payline include conducting types of research that are inherently costly, the PD/PI's available bandwidth to commit time and effort commensurate with the application's complexity and scope, and the type, source and end dates of the PD/PI's other NIH support. PDs/PIs will be permitted to temporarily exceed the \$1M threshold for a period of no more than 90 days to ensure continuity of funding support. PDs/PIs may also discontinue previously funded grants to begin work on the new project.

Please visit the NINDS website for additional details and a list of Frequently Asked Questions.

NINDS recognizes that this policy may change the research plans for some laboratories, but the intent is to advance the mission of the Institute by supporting a larger, more diverse group of investigators.

Inquiries

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