

Guidance for the NINDS R25 program for residents and fellows

The new FOA for application for administrative supplements specific to this program has been published ([PA-17-442](#)). FOAs can often be confusing because of the language that NIH requires. So below please find organized guidance for submitting administrative supplements.

IMPORTANT: The fundamental features of the program, and some tips on writing successful requests, are described below. This document is long and detailed, with the goal being that the nature of the program is well understood by the PIs, participants, and mentors. Nonetheless, this guidance is not exhaustive. Please be sure to read the FOA to ensure that you cover all supplement bases.

Note: Supplement requests should only be submitted on behalf of potential participants that the PI believes are highly likely to continue to an independent research career. This program is not for those who don't yet know whether they're interested in seriously pursuing research.

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Participation occurs in increments - each increment covers a 12 month period between July 1 and June 30th of the following year. Each potential increment of support requires a request via an administrative supplement application (see below and [PA-17-442](#)).

- Increment 1: 6-12 contiguous* months during residency
- Increment 2: 9-12 months during fellowship or 2nd residency year
- Increment 3: 12 months during fellowship

**could be all in one PGY or in the last part of one PGY and the beginning of the next PGY. Plans for non-contiguous support during residency must be approved in advance by NINDS and will require a research reason for the lack of contiguous support.*

- The first two increments of support must total at least 18 months of participation at 80% effort.
- A gap is allowed between increments 1 and 2 to allow for clinical activities, including completion of residency or clinical fellowships.
- A gap is not allowed between increments 2 and 3.
- The final 6 months of support during increment 3 is contingent upon submission of an NIH Career Development (K) or R01 application by the end of 18 months of fellowship (post-1st increment) support. (Note that this contingency also applies to those enrolled in a PHD program).

REQUIRED PARTICIPANT-SPECIFIC TEXT COMPONENTS OF THE APPLICATION

- Research and research education plan written by the participant (3 pages)
- Progress report for those entering the 2nd or 3rd increment of support (up to 3 pages)
- Mentor letter (no page limit)
- Statement by the PI of appropriate previous progress and time commitment by the participant for those entering the 2nd or 3rd increment (e.g. how many months of 80% effort did the participant complete in the previous increment and what is the commitment planned in the upcoming increment)

EFFORT

- 80% effort (4 full days) during the 5 day (Monday-Friday) work week is required while supported (for neurosurgeons, 80% effort is required for the first 12 months of support; 50% effort thereafter). **% effort is defined as % of full time professional effort. Thus, ½ day per week = 10% effort, 1 month per year = 8% effort. Time on call is not considered protected for research.** Note: we are not allowed, due to NIH policy, to provide support for 100% effort.
- Vacation time must be pro-rated (e.g. if supported for 6 months at 80% effort, up to 40% of yearly vacation may be taken during the 6-month period).
- Clinical or non-research coverage for colleagues must be made up so that R25 protected time totals 80% during the support period.
- Support may be requested for participants who are promoted to a faculty position. However, the salary provided by the R25 will be based on the PGY salary the participant would have obtained had he/she remained in fellowship status. 80% effort is still required to participate in the R25, and the institution will be expected to make up for any salary differential towards this 80% effort.

REQUESTING SUPPORT

- October 31st is the deadline to request any increment of support for a start date the following July.
- A separate supplement request must be submitted for each participant.
- With appropriate progress, all participants who complete at least 6 months of R25 research/education during residency will obtain subsequent support if a complete supplement request is submitted on time.
- A complete research/education description, and progress report when relevant, must be submitted as a supplement request by the supplement request deadline for all participants for all increments (i.e. support in increments 2 and 3 require a full supplement application by the October 31st deadline).
- Participants are encouraged to obtain non-governmental support to supplement the R25 (e.g. grants from disease foundations, etc.). This support cannot be functionally overlapping (support for research costs, equipment and travel may be obtained, but support for participant salary may not be obtained in addition to the R25 support).
- Up to \$10,000 per year may be requested for each program to support administrative costs. This must be included as a line item in a supplement application. The allowable uses for these funds is described in the FOA. Please note that NINDS intends that one anticipated use for this money is to support PI travel to the annual R25 meeting.

NEW: SUPPORT FOR ENROLLMENT IN A PHD PROGRAM

- For any participants enrolled in a PHD program, support may be requested to cover costs associated with tuition payments up to a maximum of \$12,800 per year (up to 80% of \$16,000). This can only be provided when the research and research education associated with the R25 and the research and training associated with the PHD training are overlapping. **This should be listed in the research-associated costs section of the budget, not as a tuition payment.**
- Interested PIs are strongly encouraged to contact [Stephen Korn](#) for more details regarding needed documentation before applying for such support, as this opportunity is still being developed. It is currently anticipated that the items below will be required for consideration.
- To obtain this support, a detailed description of the PHD program specific for the participant, including requirements, anticipated activities, anticipated timeline, and description of clinical

commitments must be provided. This description should be signed by the participant, primary mentor and Chair of the degree-granting department. This description is in addition to other information and falls outside the page limitations of the other documents.

- An appropriate individual from the degree-granting program (i.e. Chair, Director of Graduate Program, Mentor affiliated with the degree-granting program) should provide a letter that demonstrates an understanding of the participant's goals and the necessity for integration of goals of the degree-granting program and R25 program, including an understanding of the need for the participant to apply for K award funding, and a commitment to helping the participant obtain his/her goals.
- A letter from the institution documenting enrollment in the PHD program must be included in the supplement application.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SUPPLEMENT APPLICATION

- When writing the research description, the participant should clearly distinguish his/her work from the contributions to the project by others. Applications **should not** be written entirely in first person plural or at all in third person. **Work planned or done by the participant should be described in a first person singular narrative**, work done by others should be attributed appropriately. In addition, the participant is strongly encouraged to distinguish between his/her ideas/hypotheses and those generally held by the laboratory or research environment (in other words, what makes this project distinct from others going on in the laboratory or research environment).
- The research plan should be designed to lead to a Career Development Award (K) or R01 application. The R25 research/education description should make clear (either explicitly or implicitly) how the proposed project is expected to evolve to allow for this next application.
- As stated in the FOA, proposed coursework should be minimal, and should only consist of that necessary to design and conduct scientific projects appropriately (i.e. experimental design, statistics, etc.) or that critical to conduct of the project (an example might be a computational course for a project that requires sophisticated computational research). Needed subject matter coursework can be obtained once K award funding is obtained. [Required coursework associated with enrollment in a PHD program is also acceptable during the R25 funding period].
- The proposed mentor should write a detailed explanation of his/her mentoring and training plan that will facilitate the participant's transition to the next award. Note that all parts of a supplement request are carefully evaluated, and that a demonstration of the mentor's commitment to the candidate and understanding of the goals of the program are critical in the evaluation process.
- Highly significant, non-incremental projects are strongly encouraged. However, these proposals should be realistic. For example, a candidate with little or no research experience proposing a complex project for which the laboratory has little expertise or experience might be considered to be of excessively high risk for success. If the candidate has little experience in an area, yet the laboratory has outstanding experience in the area, the mentor should clearly describe how the candidate will obtain the skills and knowledge necessary to successfully conduct the project on the needed timeline.
- Because these projects must be designed to lead to a K or R01 application, participants should propose projects that will become their own (i.e. they should not simply be proposing to do experiments previously proposed by, and "owned by" others).

THE NINDS R25 WORKSHOP

As stated in the FOA, participants are expected to attend the NINDS R25 workshop each year that they receive support - funds are included in the supplement for this purpose. It is understood, of course, that health or other emergencies may prevent attendance, but barring an emergency, attendance is expected. Clinical coverage is not an acceptable reason to miss the workshop.

- **Dissemination of information about the workshop**
 - NINDS contacts the R25 PIs each year with information about the workshops (as well as with any other information about the R25 program).
 - NINDS cannot contact each resident and fellow, so depends upon the R25 PI to disseminate all needed information.

- **Poster Presentation**

A poster session featuring the active or planned research by the R25 residents and fellows is held as part of the R25 workshop.

 - At each R25 workshop, participants are expected to present a poster that **describes their research project**. If they haven't yet started their research, the poster should present their ideas and planned project.
 - **Posters should include only the work of the participant**. Background information can include references to other data. However, the purpose of the session is for the participant to share the research that he/she has done or is planning to do. **Posters should include little or no work planned or done by others, and should not consist of posters that describe a larger laboratory effort, such as may be used for other meetings.**

- **Specific Aims Consultation**
 - One component of the workshop is the opportunity for participants to discuss the anticipated specific aims for their future individual grant application with a mentor.
 - Because participants must submit grant applications within the first 6 months of the 3rd increment of R25 support (prior to the annual meeting in their 3rd increment), all participants who are on their 2nd increment of R25 support should submit a polished set of specific aims to the workshop, where they will have the opportunity for personalized review by faculty (the details of such submission is announced each year).
 - Participants on their 3rd increment of support who are preparing applications for independent funding should also submit a set of aims for personalized review.
 - Participants who have submitted applications but not yet obtained summary statements are welcome to submit aims for personalized discussion if they wish.

- **R25 PI workshop attendance**
 - The success of the program is highly dependent on the participation of R25 PIs not only throughout the year but also at the annual R25 workshop. Indeed, most of the structure and methods employed for this R25 program have been devised based on consultation and recommendations by the R25 PIs.
 - Administrative support is provided upon request in the grant each year. Whereas these funds may be used for a variety of allowable costs, they are intended to help support travel by the PI to the annual R25 workshop.