

Program Guidance to Potential Applicants for NHGRI Support Letters of Intent and Requests for Acceptance of Applications Requesting More than \$500,000 Direct Costs

This guidance is for potential applicants for support from NHGRI in response to

- NHGRI Requests for Applications (RFAs) or Program Announcements with Special Review Criteria (PARs) in which Letters of Intent (LOIs) are encouraged and
- Parent Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) in which the budget request exceeds \$500K in direct costs in any year.

This document has three sections: (1) Letters of Intent; (2) Applications requesting more than \$500K direct costs in any year; and (3) Communication with NHGRI Program Staff.

LETTERS OF INTENT (LOIs)

NHGRI requests Letters of Intent in all its RFAs and PARs. This section describes what is included in LOIs and what additional information is important for program staff to provide guidance to potential applicants.

NIH-requested information in LOIs

According to NIH policy, LOIs are not required, are not binding, and do not enter into the review of a subsequent application. The information requested in an LOI includes:

- Descriptive title of proposed activity
- Name, address, and telephone number of the PD/PI
- Names of other key personnel
- Participating institution
- Number and title of this funding opportunity

This information is useful to the scientific review staff to estimate the potential review workload and plan the review.

Helpful information for NHGRI staff providing guidance to potential applicants

The information requested above in the LOI does not provide NHGRI staff with sufficient information about the scientific focus of potential applications. Thus, to have a meaningful discussion about proposed applications, potential applicants are encouraged to provide staff with a one to two-page document with this information:

- Goals or specific aims
- Summary of the project significance, innovation, and generalizability
- Summary of the approaches to be used
- Estimated direct and total costs for each year being requested.

This information is not mandatory, but it will allow staff to evaluate the responsiveness of the proposed research to the FOA and whether the research aligns with NHGRI priorities. It also allows program staff to give feedback that may allow applicants to make the proposed research better fit the FOA and NHGRI priorities.

Additional information for some NHGRI RFAs and PARs

The NHGRI initiatives listed below are unique in their program requirements and their relevance to NHGRI's research mission. Program staff find that, in addition to the information requested above, the following information is useful for providing guidance on these initiatives:

- For U24 Genomic Resource applications, explain whether this work would be a one-time award or whether the resource would require any renewal applications. (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/par-17-273.html>)
- For R35 Genomic Innovator applications, include a brief description of participation in "team-science" efforts. (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/rfa-hg-18-006.html>)
- For RM1 CEGS applications, explain how the approach to be developed is highly innovative or transformative for genomic research. <https://www.genome.gov/10001771/centers-of-excellence-in-genomic-science/>

The NIH-requested information for LOIs and the NHGRI-suggested additional information should be included in one e-mail to the program staff contact listed in the FOA.

The Center for Scientific Review staff will evaluate RFA applications for completeness and compliance with application instructions, and NHGRI staff will evaluate their responsiveness. Applications that are incomplete, non-compliant, or nonresponsive will not be reviewed.

APPLICATIONS REQUESTING MORE THAN \$500K DIRECT COSTS IN ANY YEAR

Applicants planning to submit applications that request more than \$500K direct costs in any year *MUST* get approval from NHGRI. The request should be sent to a program director at least six to eight weeks prior to the anticipated submission date ([NOT-OD-02-004](#)). The e-mail requesting approval should include:

- Name of PI
- Title of Project
- Name of Institution
- Anticipated submission date
- One to two pages about the proposed project, including:
 - Goals and specific aims
 - Summary of the project's significance, innovation, and generalizability
 - Summary of the approaches to be used

- Estimated direct and total costs for each year being requested.

If approved, the document acknowledging that NHGRI will accept this application should be submitted in a cover letter along with the application.

The only exceptions to this policy are RFAs or PARs that specifically allow budgets more than \$500K direct costs per year.

COMMUNICATION WITH NHGRI PROGRAM STAFF

Science is dynamic and that is especially true of genomic science. Thus, any applicant—whether new or established, whether submitting an application for the first time or a renewal—is strongly encouraged to have a conversation with a program director about a proposed application. These discussions should take place, ideally, 10-12 weeks or more before an application is due. Advice from program staff can help prospective applicants focus their proposed research so that it is responsive to an FOA and the research priorities of NHGRI, or result in a recommendation that the proposed research is a better fit for another NIH institute. Without program advice, applicants may waste their opportunities to receive support for research that could be of interest to NHGRI and for their ideas.

NHGRI program directors are always interested in discussing proposed projects with potential applicants. If prospective applicants do not know whom to contact, all FOAs list at least one institute program contact. Also, see the NHGRI information on program director scientific areas.

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