

Department of Health and Human Services

Part 1. Overview Information

Participating Organization(s)

National Institutes of Health ([NIH \(http://www.nih.gov\)](http://www.nih.gov))

Components of Participating Organizations

Office of Strategic Coordination ([Common Fund \(https://commonfund.nih.gov/\)](https://commonfund.nih.gov/))

This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is developed as a Common Fund initiative (<https://commonfund.nih.gov>) through the Office of the NIH Director, Office of Strategic Coordination (<https://dpcpsi.nih.gov> (<https://dpcpsi.nih.gov/>)). All NIH Institutes and Centers participate in Common Fund initiatives. Grants management of the awards will be administered by the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov> (<http://www.nidcr.nih.gov/>)) on behalf of the NIH.

Funding Opportunity Title

NIH Director's Early Independence Awards (DP5 Clinical Trial Optional)

Activity Code

[DP5 \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/ac_search_results.htm?text_curr=dp5&Search_x=0&Search.y=0&Search_Type=Activity\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/ac_search_results.htm?text_curr=dp5&Search_x=0&Search.y=0&Search_Type=Activity) Early Independence Award

Announcement Type

Reissue of [RFA-RM-20-014 \(https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-20-014.html\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-20-014.html)

Related Notices

- **June 17, 2021** - Notice of Pre-Application Webinars for the High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program's Pioneer (RFA-RM-21-015), New Innovator (RFA-RM-21-016), Transformative Research (RFA-RM-21-017), and Early Independence (RFA-RM-21-018) Awards. See Notice [NOT-RM-21-017 \(https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-RM-21-017.html\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-RM-21-017.html).

Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) Number

RFA-RM-21-018

Companion Funding Opportunity

None

Number of Applications

Only up to two applications per institution are allowed as defined in [Section III. 3. Additional Information on Eligibility](#).

Assistance Listing Number(s)

93.310

Funding Opportunity Purpose

The [NIH Director's Early Independence Award \(https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence\)](https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence) supports exceptional junior investigators who wish to pursue independent research soon after completion of their terminal doctoral degree or post-graduate clinical training, thereby forgoing the traditional post-doctoral training period and accelerating their entry into an independent research career. For the program to support the best possible researchers and research, applications are sought which reflect the full diversity of the

research workforce. Individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups and from the full spectrum of eligible institutions in all geographic locations, are strongly encouraged to apply to this Funding Opportunity Announcement. In addition, applications in all topics relevant to the broad mission of NIH are welcome, including, but not limited to, topics in the behavioral, social, biomedical, applied, and formal sciences and topics that may involve basic, translational, or clinical research. The NIH Director's Early Independence Award is a component of the [High-Risk, High-Reward Research program \(https://commonfund.nih.gov/highrisk\)](https://commonfund.nih.gov/highrisk) of the [NIH Common Fund \(https://commonfund.nih.gov/\)](https://commonfund.nih.gov/).

Key Dates

Posted Date

April 26, 2021

Open Date (Earliest Submission Date)

August 03, 2021

Letter of Intent Due Date(s)

August 3, 2021

Application Due Dates			Review and Award Cycles		
New	Renewal / Resubmission / Revision (as allowed)	AIDS	Scientific Merit Review	Advisory Council Review	Earliest Start Date
September 03, 2021	Not Applicable	September 03, 2021	March 2022	May 2022	September 2022

All applications are due by 5:00 PM local time of applicant organization. All types of non-AIDS applications allowed for this funding opportunity announcement are due on the listed date(s).

Applicants are encouraged to apply early to allow adequate time to make any corrections to errors found in the application during the submission process by the due date.

No late applications will be accepted for this Funding Opportunity Announcement.

Expiration Date

September 04, 2021

Due Dates for E.O. 12372

Not Applicable

Required Application Instructions

It is critical that applicants follow the instructions in the Research (R) Instructions in the [SF424 \(R&R\) Application Guide \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/uri_redirect.htm?id=12000\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/uri_redirect.htm?id=12000), except where instructed to do otherwise (in this FOA or in a Notice from [NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/)).

Conformance to all requirements (both in the Application Guide and the FOA) is required and strictly enforced. Applicants must read and follow all application instructions in the Application Guide as well as any program-specific instructions noted in [Section IV](#). When the program-specific instructions deviate from those in the Application Guide, follow the program-specific instructions.

Applications that do not comply with these instructions may be delayed or not accepted for review.

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Part 2. Full Text of Announcement

Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

The [NIH Director's Early Independence Award](https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence) (<https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence>) provides an opportunity for exceptional junior scientists to accelerate their entry into an independent research career by forgoing the traditional post-doctoral training period. Though most newly graduated doctoral-level researchers would benefit from post-doctoral training, a small number of outstanding junior investigators are capable of launching directly into an independent research career. The Early Independence Award is intended for these select junior investigators who have already established a record of scientific innovation and research productivity and have demonstrated unusual scientific vision and maturity; typical post-doctoral training would unnecessarily delay their entry into independent research. The NIH Director's Early Independence Award also provides an opportunity for institutions to invigorate their research programs by bringing in fresh scientific perspectives of the awardees they host.

To be eligible, investigators, at the time of application, must have received their most recent doctoral degree or completed clinical training within the previous fifteen months or expect to do so within the following twelve months. To be consistent with the updated [NIH definition of Early Stage Investigators](https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm) (<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm>), eligible clinical training includes clinical residency and clinical fellowship. For full eligibility requirements, see [Section III. Eligibility Information](#) (<file:///R:/Research%20Teams%20of%20the%20Future/High-Risk%20Research/Early%20Independence%20Prog/ENS/2020/RFA-RM-19-008%20Early%20Independence%20Award.docx>).

NIH staff will conduct a site visit to assess the PD/PI's progress and to ensure that s/he is receiving the institutional resources and support outlined in the application. By the end of the award period, Early Independence Award investigators are expected to be competitive for continued funding of their research program through other NIH funding activities and for permanent research-oriented positions.

In order to support the most innovative and impactful research, the NIH recognizes the need to foster a diverse research workforce across the nation. Applications to this award program should reflect the full diversity of potential PDs/PIs, applicant institutions, and research areas relevant to the broad mission of NIH. Talented researchers from diverse backgrounds (see [NOT-OD-20-031](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html) (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html>)), including individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and women, are strongly encouraged to work with their institutions to develop applications for this Funding Opportunity Announcement. As outstanding research is conducted at a broad spectrum of institutions, it benefits the national scientific enterprise for NIH to support exceptionally innovative and impactful science that represents this breadth. Therefore, this Funding Opportunity Announcement encourages applications from the full range of eligible institutions, including those serving primarily underserved groups, those that may be less research-intensive, and from all domestic geographic locations. Applications are welcome in all research areas broadly relevant to the mission of NIH. These areas include, but are not limited to, the behavioral, medical, natural, social, applied, and formal sciences. Research may be basic, translational, or clinical. The primary requirements are that the research be highly innovative and have the potential for unusually broad impact.

The NIH Director's Early Independence Award is part of the [High-Risk, High-Reward Research program](https://commonfund.nih.gov/highrisk) (<https://commonfund.nih.gov/highrisk>) funded through the [NIH Common Fund](https://commonfund.nih.gov/) (<https://commonfund.nih.gov/>), which supports cross-cutting programs that are expected to have exceptionally high impact. All Common Fund initiatives invite investigators to develop bold, innovative, and often risky approaches to address problems that may seem intractable or to seize new opportunities that offer the potential for rapid progress.

See [Section VIII. Other Information](#) for award authorities and regulations.

Section II. Award Information

Funding Instrument

Grant: A support mechanism providing money, property, or both to an eligible entity to carry out an approved project or activity.

Application Types Allowed

New

The [OER Glossary \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11116\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11116) and the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide provide details on these application types. Only those application types listed here are allowed for this FOA.

Clinical Trial?

Optional: Accepting applications that either propose or do not propose clinical trial(s).

[Need help determining whether you are doing a clinical trial? \(https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=82370\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=82370)

Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Awards

The NIH Common Fund intends to commit approximately \$4 million to support approximately 10 awards in FY 2022. The number of awards is contingent upon availability of funds and receipt of a sufficient number of meritorious applications. Future year amounts will depend on annual appropriations and satisfactory progress.

Award Budget

Awards will be for up to \$250,000 in direct costs per year, plus applicable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs.

Award Project Period

The project period is limited to five years.

NIH grants policies as described in the [NIH Grants Policy Statement \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11120\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11120) will apply to the applications submitted and awards made from this FOA.

Section III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible Organizations

Higher Education Institutions

- Public/State Controlled Institutions of Higher Education
- Private Institutions of Higher Education

The following types of Higher Education Institutions are always encouraged to apply for NIH support as Public or Private Institutions of Higher Education:

- Hispanic-serving Institutions
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)
- Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
- Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

Nonprofits Other Than Institutions of Higher Education

- Nonprofits with 501(c)(3) IRS Status (Other than Institutions of Higher Education)
- Nonprofits without 501(c)(3) IRS Status (Other than Institutions of Higher Education)

For-Profit Organizations

- Small Businesses
- For-Profit Organizations (Other than Small Businesses)

Local Governments

- State Governments
- County Governments
- City or Township Governments
- Special District Governments
- Indian/Native American Tribal Governments (Federally Recognized)
- Indian/Native American Tribal Governments (Other than Federally Recognized)

Federal Governments

- Eligible Agencies of the Federal Government, including the NIH Intramural Program
- U.S. Territory or Possession

Other

- Independent School Districts
- Public Housing Authorities/Indian Housing Authorities
- Native American Tribal Organizations (other than Federally recognized tribal governments)
- Faith-based or Community-based Organizations
- Regional Organizations

Foreign Institutions

Non-domestic (non-U.S.) Entities (Foreign Institutions) **are not** eligible to apply.

Non-domestic (non-U.S.) components of U.S. Organizations **are not** eligible to apply.

Foreign components, as [defined in the NIH Grants Policy Statement \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11118\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11118), **are** allowed.

Required Registrations

Applicant organizations

Applicant organizations must complete and maintain the following registrations as described in the SF 424 (R&R) Application Guide to be eligible to apply for or receive an award. All registrations must be completed prior to the application being submitted. Registration can take 6 weeks or more, so applicants should begin the registration process as soon as possible. The [NIH Policy on Late Submission of Grant Applications \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-039.html\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-039.html) states that failure to complete registrations in advance of a due date is not a valid reason for a late submission.

- [Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System \(DUNS\) \(http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform\)](http://fedgov.dnb.com/webform) - All registrations require that applicants be issued a DUNS number. After obtaining a DUNS number, applicants can begin both SAM and eRA Commons registrations. The same DUNS number must be used for all registrations, as well as on the grant application.
- [System for Award Management \(SAM\) \(https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/\)](https://www.sam.gov/portal/public/SAM/) – Applicants must complete and maintain an active registration, which requires renewal at least annually. The renewal process may require as much time as the initial registration. SAM registration includes the assignment of a Commercial and Government Entity (CAGE) Code for domestic organizations which have not already been assigned a CAGE Code.
 - [NATO Commercial and Government Entity \(NCAGE\) Code \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11176\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11176) – Foreign organizations must obtain an NCAGE code (in lieu of a CAGE code) in order to register in SAM.
- [eRA Commons \(//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11123\)](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11123) - Applicants must have an active DUNS number to register in eRA Commons. Organizations can register with the eRA Commons as they are working through their SAM or Grants.gov registration, but all registrations must be in place by time of submission. eRA Commons requires organizations to identify at least one Signing Official (SO) and at least one Program Director/Principal Investigator (PD/PI) account in order to submit an application.
- Grants.gov – Applicants must have an active DUNS number and SAM registration in order to complete the Grants.gov registration.

Program Directors/Principal Investigators (PD(s)/PI(s))

All PD(s)/PI(s) must have an eRA Commons account. PD(s)/PI(s) should work with their organizational officials to either create a new account or to affiliate their existing account with the applicant organization in eRA Commons. If the PD/PI is also the organizational Signing Official, they must have two distinct eRA Commons accounts, one for each role. Obtaining an eRA Commons account can take up to 2 weeks.

Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principal Investigator)

Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Program Director(s)/Principal Investigator(s) (PD(s)/PI(s)) is invited to work with his/her organization to develop an application for support.

Individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups as well as individuals with disabilities are always encouraged to apply for NIH support.

Applications with multiple PDs/PIs will not be accepted. Only single PD/PI applications are allowed. Only the PD/PI may be listed as a Senior/Key Person and provide a Biographical Sketch.

U.S. citizenship is not required for PDs/PIs. For applications submitted on behalf of non-U.S. citizens with temporary U.S. visas, visa status must allow the PD/PI to conduct the proposed research at the applicant institution. The applicant institution is responsible for determining if and documenting that the PD's/PI's visa will allow the PD/PI to remain in the U.S. for the duration of the award.

Time window for eligibility: Given the focus on early research independence, the receipt date of the terminal doctoral degree or end of post-graduate clinical training of the PD/PI must be between June 1, 2020 and September 30, 2022. The degree receipt date is that which appears on the official transcript for the degree. The end of post-graduate clinical training includes residency and fellowship periods. The PD/PI must not have served as a post-doctoral fellow for more than twelve months before June 1, 2020.

At the time of award, either 1) the Early Independence investigator must have received a PhD, MD, DO, DC, DDS, DVM, OD, DPM, ScD, EngD, DrPH, DNSc, ND (Doctor of Naturopathy), PharmD, DSW, PsyD, or equivalent doctoral degree from an accredited domestic or foreign institution (it is the responsibility of the sponsoring institution to determine if a foreign doctoral degree is equivalent), or 2) an authorized official of the degree-granting or training institution must certify that all degree requirements have been met and that the receipt date of the degree (as will appear on the transcript) will be before September 30, 2022. An authorized official of the host institution must certify that the PD/PI will be able to conduct independent research at the institution at the time of the project start date.

Level of effort: Individuals must commit at least 9.6 person-months each year (i.e., 80% effort of a 12-month appointment) to the Early Independence Award project in years 1-2 of the project period. In years 3-5, awardees may reduce effort towards the Early Independence Award project but must commit at least 9.6 person-months each year (i.e., 80% effort of a 12-month appointment) to independent research in general.

Research independence at time of application: Individuals are eligible only if they, at the time of application submission, do not have research independence. Lack of research independence is defined functionally rather than by position title. Eligible individuals must have all the following characteristics:

- The PD/PI's current research agenda is set through concurrence with mentors.
- The PD/PI's research is funded primarily through support to other investigators (mentored fellowships such as NIH F31 or F32 Fellowships or NSF Graduate Research Fellowships do not preclude eligibility).
- The PD/PI does not have any space assigned directly by the institution for the conduct of his/her research.
- The PD/PI, according to institutional policy, cannot apply for an NIH R01 grant without special waiver or exemption from the institution.

Though PDs/PIs must not be functionally independent at the time of application submission, they may become functionally independent prior to time of award and still retain eligibility for the award.

Prospective PDs/PIs should contact appropriate institutional leaders to seek an appointment in an independent research position. Alternatively, institutions may actively recruit eligible junior scientists to apply for support through this program. In either case, the institution is expected to provide substantial support for the junior scientist, as detailed below. To foster independence, PDs/PIs may benefit from being hosted by an institution at which they have not previously studied or trained.

PD/PIs may apply for a research career development (K) award and DP5 at the same time, but [NIH policy](#) (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-03-029.html>) prohibits scientific and commitment overlap. A PD/PI may not hold a DP5 and career development (K) award concurrently. If the PD/PI receives a career development (K) award, the career development (K) award must be relinquished to receive the DP5.

2. Cost Sharing

This FOA does not require cost sharing as defined in the [NIH Grants Policy Statement](#). (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11126)

3. Additional Information on Eligibility

Number of Applications

Each institution, as defined by having a unique DUNS number or NIH IPF number, may submit only up to two applications to this FOA.

The NIH will not accept duplicate or highly overlapping applications under review at the same time. This means that the NIH will not accept:

- A new (A0) application that is submitted before issuance of the summary statement from the review of an overlapping new (A0) or resubmission (A1) application.

- A resubmission (A1) application that is submitted before issuance of the summary statement from the review of the previous new (A0) application.
- An application that has substantial overlap with another application pending appeal of initial peer review (see [NOT-OD-11-101](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-101.html) ([//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-101.html](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-11-101.html)))

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Requesting an Application Package

The application forms package specific to this opportunity must be accessed through ASSIST, Grants.gov Workspace or an institutional system-to-system solution. Links to apply using ASSIST or Grants.gov Workspace are available in [Part 1](#) of this FOA. See your administrative office for instructions if you plan to use an institutional system-to-system solution.

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

It is critical that applicants follow the instructions in the Research (R) Instructions in the [SF424 \(R&R\) Application Guide](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=12000) ([//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=12000](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=12000)) except where instructed in this funding opportunity announcement to do otherwise. Conformance to the requirements in the Application Guide is required and strictly enforced. Applications that are out of compliance with these instructions may be delayed or not accepted for review.

Letter of Intent

Although a letter of intent is not required, is not binding, and does not enter into the review of a subsequent application, the information that it contains allows IC staff to estimate the potential review workload and plan the review.

By the date listed in [Part 1. Overview Information](#), prospective applicants are asked to submit a letter of intent that includes the following information:

- Descriptive title of proposed activity
- Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the PD(s)/PI(s)
- Participating institution
- Names of other key personnel
- Number and title of this funding opportunity
- The letter of intent should be sent to:

Becky Miller, Ph.D.
 Office of Strategic Coordination
 Office of the Director
 6001 Executive Blvd, Room 8190F
 Rockville, MD 20854
 Telephone: 301-594-9979
 Fax: 301-435-7268
 Email: earlyindependence@od.nih.gov (<mailto:earlyindependence@od.nih.gov>)

Page Limitations

All page limitations described in the SF424 Application Guide and the [Table of Page Limits](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11133) ([//grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11133](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/url_redirect.htm?id=11133)) must be followed.

Instructions for Application Submission

The following section supplements the instructions found in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide and should be used for preparing an application to this FOA.

SF424(R&R) Cover

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

Cover Letter Attachment: The cover letter must include the names and institutions of those writing letters of reference for the PD/PI and key project personnel (e.g., collaborators and contractors).

13 additional pages have been deleted from this sample