

National Institutes of Health AREA PROGRAM (R15)

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NIH AREA Program

- \$300K direct support (1-3 years)
- Match with institute or center within NIH
- Meritorious research
 - Significant novel question or hypothesis
 - Significant impact

Review Criteria

- Significance – quality of research
- Approach – experimental method
- Innovation – novelty of work
- Investigator – expertise/record in field
- Environment – infrastructure to support work

Components of Proposal

- Specific Aims (1 page)
- Research Strategy (12 pages)

Research Strategy

- Significance
- Innovation
- Approach – divide by each specific aim
 - Introductory paragraph
 - Justification and feasibility
 - Review relevant literature
 - Preliminary studies
 - Research design
 - Expected outcomes
 - Potential problems/Alternative strategies
- Timetable
- Future Directions

Common Problems

Significance or Innovations

- Not significant, or exciting, or new research
- Lack of compelling rationale for experiments
- Incremental or low-impact research
- Weak or little biological, biomedical, or behavioral relevance

Common Problems

Experimental Approach

- Lack of clear, strong hypotheses, questions, or models
- Too ambitious; too many aims proposed
- Unfocused or unrelated aims; unclear or unintegrated goals
- Limited or narrow aims; not addressing the important questions
- Unnecessary experimental details for standard methods

- Not enough detail on novel methods, assays, or reagents
- Insufficient on unconvincing preliminary data
- Lack of appropriate controls; data difficult to interpret
- Not directly testing hypothesis – more confirmatory data
- Correlative or descriptive data – fishing expedition
- Experiments not directed toward mechanisms
- No discussion of alternative models or hypotheses
- No discussion of potential pitfalls
- No discussion of data interpretation or future directions

Common Problems Investigator

- No/little demonstration of expertise or publications on proposed approaches
- Low productivity; few recent or few primary author papers
- Required collaborators not recruited – letters from collaborators missing

Specific Aims

- One-page summary of questions, goals, or hypotheses
- Includes methods and how they will address and answer the hypotheses
- Need to prioritize aims
- Integrate specific aim with proposed approach

Scientific Expertise

- Publications in research area
- Preliminary data
- Collaborations when appropriate
 - Include letters of support
 - Include biographical sketch
- Must be clear that PI is in charge of the project and collaborator only assisting

Renewal Applications

- Plan for renewal immediately upon receipt of grant
- Fix renewal submission date in your head
- Start short-term projects
- Start long-term projects