Frequently Asked Questions
Academic Research Enhancement Award (AREA)

1. How do I know if my institution is eligible to apply for an AREA grant?

   All domestic institutions of higher education offering baccalaureate or advanced degrees in the health-related sciences are eligible, except those that have received NIH support totaling more than $6 million per year (in both direct and facilities & administrative costs) in at least four of the last seven years. For a list of ineligible schools see: [AREA Ineligibility List](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area_faq.htm) (Excel - 58 KB)

   Note that eligibility is determined at the time of application submission to the NIH.

2. What academic disciplines are considered "health-related sciences"?

   All disciplines that fall within the NIH congressional mandate are considered "health-related sciences".

   The NIH mission may be at: [http://www.nih.gov/about/mission.htm](http://www.nih.gov/about/mission.htm).

   NIH's program activities are carried out by its Institutes and Centers (ICs). A brief overview of each IC's mission may be found at: [http://www.nih.gov/icd/](http://www.nih.gov/icd/)

3. How are "health professional schools” and "other academic components” defined?

   A "health professional school" is an accredited public or non-profit private school that provides training leading to a degree related to the health sciences granted by that school (e.g., Ph.D., M.D., D.D.S., M.P.T., D.C., N.D., B.S.N., or equivalent degree). Health professional schools include schools or colleges of medicine, dentistry, osteopathy, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary medicine, public health, optometry, allied health, chiropractic and podiatry.

   "Other academic components” means all schools, colleges, and free-standing institutes of the institution EXCEPT the health professional schools listed above, taken as a single component.
4. Whom should I contact regarding questions about Institute/Center (IC) research interests?

The AREA grant research objectives supported by each IC may be found at:

Contact information for representatives of each IC may be found at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/contacts/parent_R15.html

5. Where can I get help preparing my application?

It is helpful to be proactive, talk to program staff and talk to successful applicants. In addition, many NIH Institutes publish guides and tips on their Web sites, some of which are listed here http://grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_tips.htm.

Additional useful resources include:
- SF424 (R&R) Application and Electronic Submission Information
- eRA Commons

Also, your school probably has an Office of Sponsored Programs or Office of Research Development that can assist you with developing your application.

6. How many pages are allowed for the Research Strategy?

Do not exceed 12 pages for the Research Strategy section of the application. The Research Strategy must include Significance, Innovation, and Approach, as well as Preliminary Studies or a Progress Report.

7. How do I determine what Facilities and Administrative cost rate (formerly called indirect costs) to use?

Facilities and Administrative costs (F&A) reimbursement is calculated using the institution's facilities and administrative rate as negotiated with HHS. The applicant institution's Office of Sponsored Research or Business Office can provide this information. If an institution does not already have a Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)-negotiated rate, refer to the NIH Grants Policy Statement, Part III - Division of Cost Allocation (DCA).

8. Will Modular Grant guidelines apply to AREA applications?

It depends upon the total amount of direct costs requested for all years of the award. Because AREA grants are multi-year funded (MYF) awards, for all years of the award, must be requested in the first budget year.

If you are requesting $250,000 or less in direct costs for the entire (1, 2, or 3-year) budget period, use the PHS398 Modular Budget format. If you are requesting $250,001 - $300,000 in direct costs for the entire budget period, use the R&R Budget format. Please note that the budget amounts used to determine whether the PHS398 Modular Budget form or R&R Budget form should be used exclude the indirect costs on subcontracts (consortium F&A).

9. What are the receipt dates for AREA applications?

The standard due dates for AREA applications are February 25, June 25, and October 25th. The dates for AIDS-related applications are May 7, September 7 and January 7. The same dates are applicable to resubmitted applications. Whenever a receipt date falls on a weekend or holiday, the application should be submitted by the following business day.

10. What should I put down on my application as a start date?

There are 3 cycles per fiscal year. As indicated below the earliest project start date depends on when you submit your application. For more information, please visit the Standard Due Dates for Competing Applications website.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scientific Merit Review</th>
<th>Cycle 1</th>
<th>Cycle 2</th>
<th>Cycle 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Council Round</td>
<td>June - July</td>
<td>October – November</td>
<td>February – March</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earliest Project Start Date</td>
<td>September or December</td>
<td>April</td>
<td>July</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Where will my application be reviewed?

AREA applications are usually evaluated for scientific and technical merit by scientific review groups administered by the NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR).

12. How is the study section assignment made?

Applications are assigned to the most appropriate study section on the basis of the scientific emphasis of the application and on NIH Referral Guidelines. The assignments are made by NIH Referral Officers, senior science administrators who have had research and scientific review experience. An applicant may suggest, in a cover letter provided with the application, up to three study sections that are considered appropriate to review the application. The cover letter may also request assignment to a specific Institute or Center.

13. Where can I find the study section rosters?

Rosters of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) study sections are available at http://www.csr.nih.gov/Committees/rosterindex.asp. The CSR website also has descriptions of the scientific areas covered by each study section at http://www.csr.nih.gov/review/irgdesc.htm.

14. Do reviewers give special consideration to AREA applications?

(04/15/2014)
14. Can a PD/PI, or one PD/PI if multiple PD/PIs are proposed, have an active NIH research grant?

Yes, each PD/PI must have an appointment at an AREA-eligible institution. In addition, each PD/PI may not be the PD/PI of an award at the time of award of an AREA grant.

15. How important are the AREA-specific programmatic features in an application?

They are extremely important. The experience of the investigator in working with students, the suitability of the institution for an award, and the impact of an AREA grant on the institution will be evaluated by reviewers. Failure to discuss these elements of the program will lower the enthusiasm of reviewers for the application.

16. How much detail should the application include about the plans to train students?

While one of the goals of the AREA Program is to expose students to research, applications should not include training plans. An AREA grant is a research award, not a training or fellowship award. The application should focus on plans to expose students to hands-on mentoring research.

17. Is it a good idea to have a collaborator or consultant?

Since “Investigator” is one of the review criteria, the reviewers will determine if the applicant is appropriately trained and has the necessary expertise to accomplish the proposed research. If the applicant does not have the necessary expertise, then either a collaborator or consultant (along with a letter confirming this role) is highly recommended. Usually, a consultant will provide advice or service for a fee to the applicant, while a collaborator is key personnel with significant input into the experimental approach and data analysis.

18. What is a fundable score for an AREA application?

There is no predetermined fundable score for an AREA application. Each Institute or Center has the authority and responsibility to make funding decisions based on priority score, program balance and program priorities.

19. Is there a separate budget allocated for AREA grants?

No. In Fiscal Year 2002, the funds for the AREA program were moved from the Office of the Director to the various ICs.

20. When are awards announced?

Although NIH has shortened this time interval, the time from submission to award is about 9 months. During this time, your application is received, assigned to an institute and referred to a study section for the first level of review. After it is scored, it undergoes the second level of review by the Institute/Center Council. Program staff then make funding recommendations and work with grants management staff to issue the award.

21. Can AREA grantees apply for supplemental funds?

An AREA grantee may be eligible for an administrative supplement to improve the diversity of the research workforce by supporting and recruiting students from groups that have been shown to be underrepresented. Because policies may vary among NIH Institute and Centers (IC), the grantee must check with the awarding IC before submitting an application for a supplement. There must be at least one year remaining on the AREA grant at the time the supplement is awarded and only one supplement at a time is allowed.

22. What reports are required?

A Progress Report is required and is due annually on or before the anniversary of the budget/project period start date of the award. NIH will send an email notification to the PD/PI two months before the anniversary of the award requesting that the progress report be submitted electronically. See http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/myf.htm or NOT-OD-11-010 for more information.

23. Can an AREA grant be transferred to another institution?

AREA grants can only be transferred to another AREA eligible institution. However, there are many other factors that must be considered in the geographic relocation of a grant. If you are considering such a transfer, please contact your Program Officer early in the relocation process.

24. What should I do if I don't get funded?

Be prepared to revise and resubmit your application. Revising is your opportunity to respond to the criticisms of the Scientific Review Group and use their comments to improve your grant application. First, talk with your Program Officer to review your summary statement and to obtain advice. It is also wise to ask someone experienced in grantsmanship and not involved in your proposed research to review your application, summary statement, and revision plans.

25. Where do I respond to the comments of the reviewers? May I pick the comments to discuss?

You should respond as thoroughly as possible to all of the reviewers’ comments in a one-page section called “Introduction”. The Introduction should include a summary of the substantial additions, deletions, and changes to the application, as well as a response to the issues and criticism raised in the Summary Statement. In addition, the changes in the text of the application must be clearly marked by appropriate bracketing, indenting, or changing of typography.

26. Can an AREA application include a subaward to an AREA-eligible institution?

An AREA award is permitted to have a subcontract to a non-AREA-eligible institution. However, applicants should keep the goals of the AREA program in mind when preparing the application, which include strengthening the research environment of the institution and exposing students to research.

27. When multiple PD/PIs are proposed, must all PD/PIs and all institutions involved be AREA-eligible?

Yes, each PD/PI must have an appointment at an AREA-eligible institution. In addition, each PD/PI may not be the PD/PI of an active NIH grant at the time of award of an AREA grant.
28. **Can a PD/PI, or one PD/PI if multiple PD/PIs are proposed, have an active NIH research grant?**
   No, each PD/PI must not have an active NIH research grant at the time of award. If multiple PD/PIs are proposed, each of the PD/PIs may not have an active NIH research grant at the time of award.

29. **Does research funding from other sources, like private foundations or non-NIH agencies, make a PD/PI ineligible for an R15 application?**
   No, a PD/PI can be the PI on a non-NIH grant at the time the R15 is awarded, assuming all other eligibility criteria are met.