

April 6, 2009

Hi Folks

I wanted to provide you with an update on recent developments in new funding opportunities triggered by the Economic Stimulus Package legislation - the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). We have been posting and updating these announcements and their associated RFA's on our UTHSC-H ARRA website:

<http://www.uth.tmc.edu/research/ARRA/ARRA.html>

Some recent updates that may be particularly relevant to some you are the following:

* Challenge Grants (RCI). (Due Date April 27): There has been an unparalleled level of interest in responding to this RFA for relatively large (up to \$1 million) short term (2 yrs max) new research grant proposals. As of Friday there were over 70 RCI proposals being developed by UTHSC-H investigators in Cayuse with the expectation that our faculty would submit more than 200 separate proposals in response to this RFA. This is in line with predictions that the NIH is expecting in excess of 20,000 RCI applications. This raises several predictable concerns. The first is that the electronic submission processes are likely to become overloaded long before the April 27 deadline. OSP is expanding their capacity to deal with the anticipated flood of applications but they are encouraging investigators to get their applications submitted as soon as possible. The NIH is accepting RCI applications now, so these applications can be prepared and uploaded into Cayuse424 immediately, avoiding what is likely to be a very stressful few days in late April. Some additional considerations:

* The RCI is a new class of applications so we have no prior experience on what will be the most effective format for applications. Dr. Maureen Goode, Administrative Director of the Center for Clinical and Translational Sciences (CCTS), recently prepared some suggestions for RCI proposals. I have attached them (Challenge Grant Tips) in case you may find them useful. They struck me as sensible advice from an experienced grant writer.

* Even though the NIH has committed only \$200 million to the Challenge Grant Program (enough to fund 200 - 400 proposals), they have

said repeatedly that this number may grow based on the response to the RFA. They have already expanded the funding by announcing that CER (Comparative Effectiveness Research) projects will be funded with additional CER-designated funds. Many people expect that the amount of money allocated to this program will increase dramatically based on the huge response to the RFA. Much of this may depend on whether the responses obtained suggests that these grants will find their way rapidly into the economy with new hires and new equipment purchases.

* Please note all RCI applications need to be submitted electronically to Grants.gov so they must be assembled in Cayuse. Since many investigators are not familiar with Cayuse, our electronic grants assembly and submission system, OSP is offering to provide short tutorials on Cayuse to groups of investigators interested in learning how to use it. Please contact OSP if you want to take advantage of this offer. My advice is to take advantage of this opportunity now, because it will be much more difficult to schedule these sessions once the folks from OSP have to deal with the large number of new grant proposals later this month.

* "Grand Opportunities" Grants (RC2). (Due date May 27). There is also a lot of interest in this RFA for larger research projects (\$500 thousand to several million). Details of this program (RFA-OD-09-004) can be viewed at the HSC ARRA website. There have been no recent announcement with respect to this program but it is generating a lot of interest, particularly among larger research groups.

* Faculty Recruitment Awards - Research Core Centers to Enhance Research Resources (P30). (Due date May 29): This is a new RFA announced last week (see the ARRA website for more information) to provide salary and start-up costs (up to \$1 million) to enable the recruitment of entry level tenure-track faculty members joining research centers, groups or cores. The definition of what constitutes one of these "cores" is pretty vague but really describes a group on investigators with a common, reasonably well-defined, area of research concentration. Application to this program can only be made by an institutional official such as a Department Chair, or a Core Lab Director or a senior faculty member. This program is being administered by individual NIH Institutes and each Institute has established its own rules for eligibility. I have attached a spreadsheet of the type and number of awards each institute is making as

well as the number of applications that they will permit per institution (Limits Contact Page).

* The cap on applications per institution may pose a problem for us if several groups want to apply to an institute with a cap. To address this problem I am asking that the Associate Deans for Research at each of the Schools (or the Associate Director of the IMM) work with their faculty to identify who is interested in responding to this RFA and whether there are potential problems in terms of caps that may apply to individual Institutes. They should then select the applicant they identify as having the strongest probability of success. This process should be completed by Wednesday, April 22. I am asking that they notify me of their selections on Wednesday April 22 so I can determine whether there are multiple proposals from different Schools targeting an Institute with an eligibility limitation. If a problem exists I will work with the Associate Deans and a small number of impartial faculty to select the applicant with the best probability of success. We should be able to complete this process by Friday, April 24 and then notify the potential applicants who has been selected to apply. These researchers can then file the non-binding Letter of Intent with NIH by Wednesday, April 29. The actual deadline for submission of these proposals is one month later, Friday May 29

* Supplements to NIH Grants. This is still the best bet for additional funding for researchers who have active NIH grants. The terms and conditions of these supplements vary institute by institute. Some have deadlines, some don't, some have specific caps and others just general guidelines. I hope that all HSC investigators with NIH funding have already been in contact with their program officers and/or consulted their Institute web sites. Informally people are being encouraged to get their supplement requests in as soon as possible to insure the best chance for funding. There is great uncertainty as to how much of their ARRA funds NIH Institutes will commit to these supplements, particularly if there is a flood of excellent Challenge Grant proposals competing for the available resources. OSP tells me they are already processing administrative supplement awards to several of our investigators.

* Terms and Conditions: the NIH has just released two new notices, NOT-OD-09-079 and NOT-OD-09-080, that deal specifically with the format of budgets to be attached to administrative supplements and competitive revision supplements and the general terms and conditions that will be applied to supplement funding. Of particular interest is that these

supplement funds (ARRA T-3 awards) will be treated as distinct from the funds of the parent grant in terms of duration of the award, opportunities for "no cost extensions" and reporting requirements. There is a lot of useful information in the 09-080 notice. Links to both notices have been placed in the Office of research ARRA website. I gather from OSP that these T-3 supplement awards are to be submitted on PHS 398 forms rather than through the electronic Grants.gov electronic submission procedures.

* Supplements for students and science educators. The NIH has a separate program (NOT-OD-09-060) to provide salary supplements for high school or undergraduate students or science educators who want to work with an NIH-funded investigator for the summer. There is also a small supplies budget attached to the salary supplement. The links to the RFA can be located in the UTHSC-H ARRA website mentioned above. In general students and educators are being advised to either contact individual NIH-funded PI's directly or a campus coordinator to explore options for summer fellowships. Dr. Gary Rosenfeld, in the Medical School, has generously volunteered to serve as the point of contact person for this program.

* Funding of Previously Reviewed Grants. The NIH has just released a new notice (NOT-OD-09-078) that provides more information about the program to fund 2-year projects included within grant proposals that were submitted and reviewed in FY2008 and FY2009. Different NIH Institutes are implementing different policies with regards to this process of back-filling meritorious grants that were not funded during this period so investigators are advised to review the information on the websites for the different NIH Institutes and Centers. Interestingly this program also applies to grant proposals currently under review and scheduled for Council review prior to September 30, 2009. NIH project officers are apparently contacting individual PI's with invitations to submit a modified proposal for funding. I have heard anecdotally that individual researchers are being contacted by NIH program officials to request that they prepare and submit revised 2-year applications of previously reviewed grants. It appears that the NIH Program Officers have been given a lot of discretion in terms of which projects are being invited to submit a revised proposal so if you have 'scored' applications submitted in FY08 or FY09, it is certainly worth bringing to the attention of your program officials meritorious aspects of that proposals that could be accomplished in a 2-year time frame.

* High - End Instrumentation Grants (S10). (Due date May 6). The High-end Instrumentation Grants for single pieces of equipment in the \$600,000 - \$8 million price range is currently open. Although there is no limit to the number of proposals that can be submitted, I am asking investigators planning to respond to this RFA to notify me of their intent so we can avoid duplicative proposals and address issues of institutional support. The deadline for this RFA is May 6.

* Facilities Construction Grants (C06 and G20) (Due dates between May 6 and September 16). Teams of HSC scientists and facilities planners are developing proposals for both the C06 and G20 RFAs. There have been no recent developments in terms of the NIH announcements. Faculty interested in these programs should contact me for further information.

* Others: Autism Spectrum Disorder Grants; Comparative Effectiveness Research Grants; Health IT Grants, Wellness Grants. There has been no recent activities in these areas. The autism RFA's are out, we are all waiting on the release of the RFAs in these other important areas of research opportunity.

* Research Support Services

* OSP: Several faculty members have expressed concern about the ability of OSP to handle the very large number of proposals anticipated to be associated with the deadlines for these large programs. Johnna Kincaid and the staff of OSP are making every effort to expand their capacity to process and upload proposals rapidly. Their task will be made much easier, and the stress of the faculty will be much less, if people get their ARRA proposals submitted to OSP well in advance of the deadline.

* HR: HR is well aware that the goal of the Economic Stimulus Program is to increase hiring at all levels of the economy. The HR staff is implementing a number of steps to expand and accelerate the process of recruiting and hiring in the research and technical job categories. Eric Fernet, Vice- President of Human Resources and Craig Vollmers, Director of Recruitment and Retention, and their staff are anticipating these future challenges and will be releasing a memo in the next few days that will describe the steps being taken to address this problem. Their job

will be made much easier if faculty, once they are aware that they will be receiving additional funding for recruitment and hiring, let the HR staff know so they can respond rapidly once the Grant Awards are made.

* Animal Welfare Committee. The AWC will be releasing, in the next few days recommendations for processes to be followed to facilitate the timely review and approval of new grants and grant supplements that involve animal research. These will be posted on the ARRA website.

* PAF and Reporting Requirements: the NIH is only now providing the first requirements for reporting of expenditures on ARRA awards (see NOT-OD-09-080). The PAF team is engaged in setting up the new accounting procedures that will be necessary to track these funds since they will be treated separately from funds awarded through the traditional (NIH base budget) funding mechanisms. Until we know what the new reporting requirements will be, we don't know the full extent to which modified administrative procedures will be required by all of us to keep track of these "special" funds.

My staff and I will be making every effort to post new announcement of funding opportunities on the Office of Research ARRA website. Please let me know if we can be of any assistance to you in addressing the enormous opportunities inherent in this new federal research funding initiative.

Best wishes

Peter

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