

Hi Folks,

As many of you are aware, there has been a flurry of announcements from the NIH and other federal research funding agencies concerning new opportunities triggered by the Economic Stimulus Package legislation - the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). We have been posting 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 of you are the following:

* **"Grand Opportunities" Grants (RC2).** Monday afternoon the NIH announced an RFA for a new type of grant, "Grand Opportunities" (GO) grants. These GO grants are designated to support Research and Research Infrastructure grants that propose "major new large scale research projects with the potential to accelerate critical break-throughs that may lay the foundation for new fields of research" (in contrast presumably to the majority of research that we all do !). Details of this program (RFA-OD-09-004) can be viewed at the HSC ARRA website web site. These 1- or 2 - year proposals are for a minimum of \$500K and may be much larger. The NIH has allocated \$200 million for these grants and expects to make 200 awards. Deadline for submission in May 27, 2009.

* **Supplements to NIH Grants.** Last week the NIH announced a bundle of RFA's to support the award of Administrative Supplements and Competitive Revision Applications for some types of currently funded NIH grants. The announcement also included a 3rd set of supplements for the support of students (both high school and undergraduate) and science educators seeking a summer research experience with an NIH-funded research program. There are significant differences in the types as well as the terms of the supplement awards being supported by different NIH institutes so NIH-grant holders should check with their Institute web sites (http://grants.nih.gov/recovery/ic_supp.html) and/or their project officers to determine their eligibility for these supplementary awards. Many of these supplements seem to be in the tens to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

There are suggestions that this may be a preferred route for the distribution of much of the ARRA funding so funded researchers are encouraged to explore their eligibility for this type of award as soon as possible. There are deadlines associated with these supplement awards that seem to range from mid-April to early May.

* **Funding of Previously Reviewed Grants.** The NIH has announced it is going back through research grant proposals reviewed and scored in the 2008 and 2009 to identify meritorious projects that may include specific components suitable for 2-year funding awards. At the moment project officers are contacting individual PI's with invitations to submit a modified proposal for funding. The NIH has announced a formal RFA that will enable application for consideration under this program will be forthcoming soon. Stay tuned

* **Challenge Grants (RCI).** These grants have created an unparalleled level of excitement in the research community for this novel program of new grant awards. Details are available from the UTHSC-H web-site. The grants are large (up to \$1 million) for a short duration (maximum two years) and require an abbreviated research proposal (12 pages). Each of the NIH Centers and Institutes has identified the topic areas that they will consider as priorities for funding via this RFA (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/challenge_award/High_Priority_Topics.pdf). The NIH has announced that it has initially set aside \$200 million for this program (sufficient for 200 awards) but may increase the level of funding based on the response of the research community to this RFA.

Given the huge number of proposals that appear to be in preparation in response to this RFA it is likely (only a guess I admit) that additional funding will eventually be allocated to this program. Even with additional funding however it is likely that the pay-line will still be very low because some many researchers are applying. One interesting suggestion from a seasoned reviewer is that the opinion of most reviewers, faced with a mountain of applications, will be largely determined by the title and the abstract. Research intending to respond to the Challenge Grant RFA would be well advised to create a really well crafted and interesting abstract as well as a very snappy title!

* **Equipment Grants (S10).** The Shared Instrumentation Grant RFA closed Monday afternoon. UT-Houston investigators submitted 13 separate proposals in response to this RFA. The last proposal was uploaded by OSP 2 minutes before the deadline !! The NIH has recently opened another round of the High-end Instrumentation Grants for single pieces of equipment in the \$600,000 - \$8 million price range. 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 clarify issues of institutional response. The deadline for this RFA is May 6.

* **Facilities Construction grants.** The NIH is also supporting grants for the renovation or modification of core research facilities (G20) and general research facilities (C06). The Core Facilities RFA is for projects ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million and the general research facilities is for projects ranging from \$2 million to \$15 million. Because there is a cap on the number of G20 and C06 applications each institution can submit and because these projects require extensive modifications to University-owned facilities, only proposals reviewed and approved by the Office of Research are eligible for submission in response to this RFA

* **Autism Spectrum Disorder Grants.** The NIMH has just released a bundle of ARRA RFAs specifically related to the issue of the potential Heterogeneity in Autism Spectrum Disorders. There appears to be funding available to support a substantial number of new grant awards.

* **Comparative Effectiveness Research (CER).** There is a specific area of interest in the Challenge Grant RFA related to Comparative Effectiveness research with additional funding available to support research projects responsive the RFAs in this Challenge Area (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/challenge_award/High_Priority_Topics.pdf). AHRQ and the Office of Secretary, HHS have announced that additional RFAs and announcements will be forthcoming in June after the release of the Institute of Medicine Report on CER. There are indications that as much as \$1 billion will be available to support CER projects and programs. Stay tuned.

* **Health IT (HIT).** In addition to the \$18 billion allocated to support the implementation of Electronic Medical Records in hospitals and clinical practices, \$2 billion has been allocated to the Office of the National Coordinator of Health Information Technology to develop the research and infrastructure necessary to support the implementation of electronic health information services nationally. This program also includes significant funding for training of health professionals in health IT. A new National Coordinator was appointed last week and further announcements on RFAs and new programs should be forthcoming soon. Stay tuned.

* **National Science Foundation.** The NSF has announced that it is reviewing previously submitted and reviewed proposals to identify meritorious projects that will be considered for funding. This process is in the hands of the individual project officers.

* **Economic Impact Information.** The explicit goal of ARRA funding is to boost economic activity in communities receiving ARRA awards. Research proposals submitted in response to ARRA RFAs should consider including specific statements on the anticipated impact of the award on economic activity in the community. I have attached a study from the Families USA Global health Initiative that catalogues the relative impact of NIH funding in terms of net dollars of economic activity and jobs created in different states. You may be gratified to see that Texas leads the list in terms of the most economic activity generated per NIH dollar (\$2.49 per NIH dollar). You may find this information, along with personnel to be hired and equipment to be purchased useful information to include in your ARRA proposals.

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