



Science Policy News September 2014

New NIH Funding Program for Select Investigators

A few NIH Institutes and Centers have expressed an interest in offering significant, long-term funding for select investigators, replacing funding specific research projects. The goal would be to allow dedicated researchers a more stable, substantial funding source to encourage research risk-taking, more adventurous lines of inquiry or the development of new techniques.

NCI Outstanding Investigator Award. NCI has announced a new program type entitled Outstanding Investigator Award (R35 grant). The objective is to provide long-term support to researchers with outstanding records of cancer research productivity who propose exceptional research while encouraging risk-taking and more adventurous lines of inquiry. The Outstanding Investigator Award provides funding stability over an extended period of time. Researchers must commit at least 50% of his or her research time to the Outstanding Investigator Award, with teaching, administrative and clinical duties excluded from this calculation. An award under this program would replace current NCI funding on individual grants. A successful applicant may be awarded up to \$600,000 per year towards direct costs exclusive of third-party facilities and administrative costs. More information about [this program](#) is available on the NCI website.

NIGMS MIRA. Another program is a NIGMS pilot program entitled Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA). NIGMS believes that a new funding mechanism would further research in that it would:

- increase funding stability and thus enhance the ability to take on ambitious scientific projects using creative problem solving;
- increase flexibility to follow new research directions; and
- in the long term, reduce time spent writing and reviewing grant applications and increase time spent conducting research.



Science Policy News

ASIP has submitted comments in response to the NIGMS's Request For Information on their draft pilot program. Specifically, ASIP requested that NIGMS:

- Specify that time spent on clinical duties, administration, and teaching responsibilities will be excluded from the denominator when calculating whether a physician scientist is devoting the minimum of 50% of his or her time towards the MIRA research proposal;
- Clarify and release for public comment the criteria that will be used to evaluate pilot program success;
- Establish a minimum percentage of funding to support early- and mid-stage investigators;
- Specify the total funding to be provided to the MIRA pilot program;
- Further explain the criteria to be considered by reviewers when evaluating a MIRA proposal; and
- Clarify how MIRA grants will interact with grants from other Institutes or Centers, as well as research projects where the MIRA grant applicant is listed as a principal investigator on a multi-investigator NIGMS grant.

The RFI and additional information about the [proposed pilot program](#) are available on the NIGMS website.