

Academic Research Enhancement Award (AREA) Program

**Samuel Ashe, Director, Division of Grants Policy
Office of Policy for Extramural Research Administration,
OER, NIH**

FDP
September 22, 2016



National Institutes of Health

Purpose

- **Overview of AREA (R15) program**
- **How R15s differ from other Rs**
- **Strategies for success**



National Institutes of Health

Goals of AREA program

- Support meritorious research
- Strengthen research environment of schools that have not been major recipients of NIH support
- Expose undergraduate &/or graduate students in such environments to meritorious research
 - Research exposure, not training
 - Goal = consider research careers
- No diversity-related goals



Key features

- 3 year project period
- Up to \$300,000 direct cost over 3 years
- Multiple PIs are allowed, if all eligible
- 12 page Research Strategy
- Grants are renewable



National Institutes of Health

Questions to determine fit

- **Does lab require >\$100K/year?**
 - Intended to be only NIH research grant
- Will project improve eligible environment?
 - e.g., Are critical parts done elsewhere?
- Will project stimulate students' interests? (Will they consider a research career?)
 - Will students' roles in project simulate interest?
- Can project pragmatically be performed by undergrad/graduate students at the eligible institution?



Application Logistics

Funded through the R15

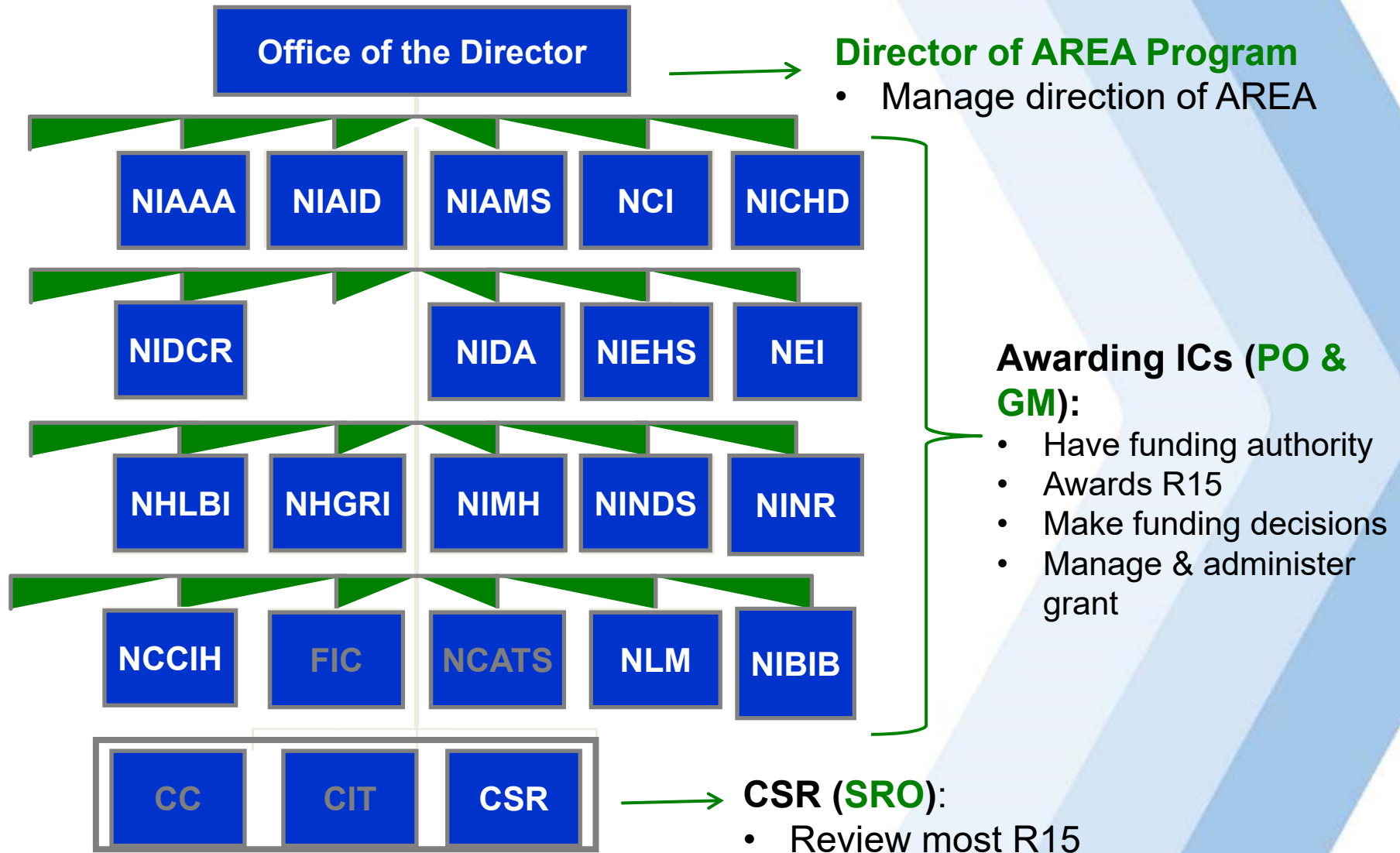
- Parent: PA-16-200
- Reissued April 18 for June 25 & later

All NIH ICs participate except FIC and NCATS



National Institutes of Health

Who does what for R15s



Assignments for R15

- **Institute/Center:**
 - Funding consideration
 - Lifespan of award
 - e.g. AI (NIAID), AT (NCCIH)
- **Scientific Review Group**
 - Standing committee/”standing study section”
 - Special Emphasis Panel/SEP



Differences between R15 & other Rs

- **Unique review**
 - Review criteria
 - Management of review
- **Unique application requirements**
- **Eligibility**



National Institutes of Health

Where to find review criteria

Review criteria are in Part 2,
Section V, Part 1

Apply for Grant Electronically

A compatible version of [Adobe Reader](#) is required for download
<http://www07.grants.gov/contactus/contactus.jsp>.

Table of Contents

[Part 1. Overview Information](#)

[Part 2. Full Text of the Announcement](#)

[Section I. Funding Opportunity Description](#)

[Section II. Award Information](#)

[Section III. Eligibility Information](#)

[Section IV. Application and Submission Information](#)

[Section V. Application Review Information](#)

[Section VI. Award Administration Information](#)

[Section VII. Agency Contacts](#)

[Section VIII. Other Information](#)

Section V. Application Review Information

1. Criteria

Only the review criteria described below will be considered in the review process. As part of the NIH mission, support of biomedical and behavioral research are evaluated for scientific and technical merit through the NIH

For this particular announcement, note the following:

The objectives of the R15 program are to (1) provide support for meritorious research, (2) strengthen the research of research field(s) involved, to provide research opportunities to students, and to strengthen the research environment. Preliminary data are not required for an R15 application; however, they may be included if available.

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to advance the research field(s) involved, to provide research opportunities to students, and to strengthen the research environment. Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a score for each criterion. Reviewers will also provide an overall impact score (as applicable for the project proposed).

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a score for each criterion. Reviewers will also provide an overall impact score (as applicable for the project proposed).

Significance

Does the project address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific basis for the project? If the project is achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? Does the project address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific basis for the project? If the project is achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? Does the project address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field? Is there a strong scientific basis for the project? If the project is achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved?

Investigator(s)

Are the PD(s)/PI(s), collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If Early Stage Investigator, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? If the project is collaborative or multi-PD(s)/PI(s), do they have integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance and organizational structure appropriate? Do they have suitable experience in supervising students in research?

Innovation

Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel methodological approaches, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Approach



Application Instructions are in part 2, Section IV

Application instructions are in Part 2, Section IV, Part 2

Apply for Grant Electronically

A compatible version of [Adobe Reader](#) is required for download. For Assistance, visit <http://www07.grants.gov/contactus/contactus.jsp>.

Table of Contents

[Part 1. Overview Information](#)

[Part 2. Full Text of the Announcement](#)

[Section I. Funding Opportunity Description](#)

[Section II. Award Information](#)

[Section III. Eligibility Information](#)

[Section IV. Application and Submission Information](#)

[Section V. Application Review Information](#)

[Section VI. Award Administration Information](#)

[Section VII. Agency Contacts](#)

[Section VIII. Other Information](#)

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

1. Requesting an Application Package

Applicants must obtain the SF424 (R&R) application package associated with this funding opportunity by downloading the package from the Grants.gov website or following the directions provided at [Grants.gov](#).

2. Content and Form of Application Submission

It is critical that applicants follow the instructions in the [SF424 \(R&R\) Application Guide](#), including the instructions for the application package. Conformance to these instructions is strictly enforced. Applications that are out of compliance with these instructions may be delayed or rejected.

For information on Application Submission and Receipt, visit [Frequently Asked Questions – Applications](#).

Page Limitations

All page limitations described in the SF424 Application Guide and the [Table of Page Limits](#) must be followed.

Instructions for Application Submission

The following section supplements the instructions found in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide. All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

SF424(R&R) Cover

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

SF424(R&R) Project/Performance Site Locations

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed, with the following additions: the research will be directed by the PD(s)/PI(s) at the grantee institution, the primary performance component.

SF424(R&R) Other Project Information

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed.

Facilities & Other Resources: The following information must be included.

- A profile of the students of the applicant institution/academic component and any information on the number of students who have obtained a baccalaureate degree and gone on to obtain an academic or professional doctoral degree.
- A description of the special characteristics of the institution/academic component that make it a unique and important component of the AFEA program are to: (1) provide support for meritorious research; (2) strengthen the research environment.



R15-specific instructions in:

- Project/Performance Site Locations
- Other Project Information: Facilities & Other Resources
- Budget
- Biosketch
- Research Plan: Research Strategy



National Institutes of Health

Addition to PI Biosketch

- Summary of previous/current experience supervising students in research
- Specify which pubs/patents involved students under their supervision



National Institutes of Health

Don't start your Biosketch with:

“I have the expertise, leadership, training, and motivation necessary to successfully carry out the proposed research project. I have a broad background in Topic A, with specific training and expertise in Sub-Topics B, C, and D.”

I have the expertise, leadership, training, expertise and motivation necessary to successfully carry out the proposed research project. I have a broad background in psychology, with specific training and expertise in ethnographic and survey research and secondary data analysis on psychological aspects of drug addiction. My research includes neuropsychological changes associated with addiction. As PI or co-Investigator on several university- and NIH-funded grants, I laid the groundwork for the proposed research by developing effective measures of disability, depression, and other psychosocial factors relevant to the aging substance abuser, and by establishing strong ties with community providers that will make it possible to recruit and track participants over time as documented in the following publications. In addition, I successfully administered the projects (e.g. staffing, research protections, budget), collaborated with other researchers, and produced several peer-reviewed publications from each project. As a result of these previous experiences, I am aware of the importance of frequent communication among project members and of constructing a realistic research plan, timeline, and budget. The current application builds logically on my prior work. During 2005-2006 my career was disrupted due to family obligations. However, upon returning to the field I immediately resumed my research projects and collaborations and successfully competed for NIH support.

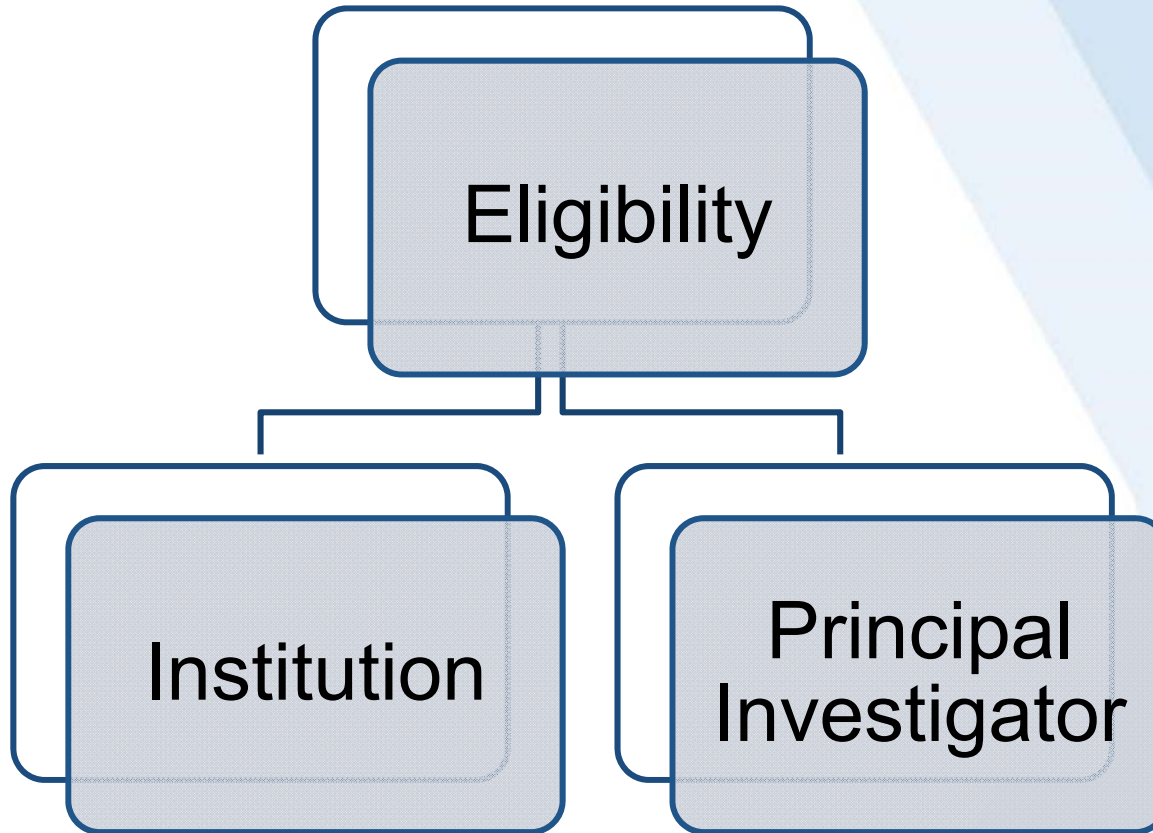


Examples of Institutional Support

- See PA-16-200 and
 - Equipment
 - Lab space
 - Release time
- Items PI will not be charged for (e.g., no *per diem* for animals)
- Pilot funds
- Supply funds for student research
- Stipends or housing for summer students
- Travel grants



Eligibility



Eligibility = applicant institution and PI only
Eligibility \neq collaborators



Where to Find Eligibility in the PA

R15-specific eligibility criteria are in Part 2, Section III

Apply for Grant Electronically

A compatible version of [Adobe Reader](#) is required for download. For <http://www07.grants.gov/contactus/contactus.jsp>.

Table of Contents

[Part 1. Overview Information](#)

[Part 2. Full Text of the Announcement](#)

[Section I. Funding Opportunity Description](#)

[Section II. Award Information](#)

[Section III. Eligibility Information](#)

[Section IV. Application and Submission Information](#)

[Section V. Application Review Information](#)

[Section VI. Award Administration Information](#)

[Section VII. Agency Contacts](#)

[Section VIII. Other Information](#)

Section III. Eligibility Information

1. Eligible Applicants

Eligible Organizations

Higher Education Institutions

- Public/State Controlled Institutions of Higher Education
- Private Institutions of Higher Education

The following types of Higher Education Institutions are always encouraged to apply for NIH support as Public or Private Institutions of Higher Education:

- Hispanic-serving Institutions
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
- Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)
- Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian Serving Institutions
- Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs)

In addition, all organizations must meet the following two criteria:

1. The applicant organization must be an accredited public or non-profit private school that grants baccalaureate or higher degrees in the natural, behavioral, or behavioral sciences
 2. The applicant organization may not receive research support from the NIH totaling more than \$6 million per year (direct costs) in each of 4 of the last 7 years.
- Note that all activity codes are included except the following: C06, S10, and all activity codes starting with a G.

Institutions with Health Professional Schools or Colleges

For institutions composed of multiple academic components (i.e., schools or colleges), the criterion of financial eligibility is based on the total research grant monies received, not by the institution (university) as a whole, but by the individual health professional schools or colleges (e.g., School of Medicine, College of Nursing, School of Pharmacy, etc.). Thus, each of the following is considered independently when determining the financial eligibility of the applicant organization.

- Health professional school/college: Accredited public or non-profit private school/college that grants a terminal health professional degree (e.g., DDS, DO, PharmD, BSN, DVM, DrPH, OD, DPT, DC, ND, DPM).
 - Accreditation must be provided by a body approved for such purpose by the Secretary of Education.
 - Health professional schools/colleges that meet the above requirements may include schools or colleges of dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, veterinary medicine, public health, optometry, allied health, chiropractic, naturopathy, etc.
- Other Academic component: Once the health professional schools/colleges have been excluded, the financial eligibility of the remaining academic component is determined by the sum of all remaining schools, colleges, and free-standing institutes of the institution.

Additional Eligibility Guidance

To determine the financial eligibility of an institution, applicants should consult the [list of ineligible institutions](#) on the AI



Institutional Eligibility

1. US
2. Public or private non-profit
3. Institution of Higher Education



More Institutional Eligibility

4. Accredited
5. Confer Bachelor or advanced degrees in biomedical/behavioral science
 - *e.g.* BSN, BA biology, MPH, DPM
 - Community College (BSN), SLAC (BA biology), Podiatric School (DPM), State Health Graduate School (MS-Phys Asst, MPH)



National Institutes of Health

More Institutional Eligibility cont.

6. Financial limit

- Receives less than \$6 million per year in NIH support in 4 out of last 7 years
 - Everything except C06, S10, G series
 - Require institution receive grants in order to use products of C06, S10, Gs



State University – Main Campus is on the financial ineligibility list.
Is State University – Branch Campus eligible?



National Institutes of Health

Is Branch Campus Part Of Main Campus?

- Recall #4, 5, 6
- Separate legal entities
- Branch = applicant institution
- What is accredited? Where is degree issued?
 - Main campus = not considered separately
 - Branch campus = considered separately



National Institutes of Health

PI Eligibility

- Primary appointment at eligible institution
- Multiple PI OK if all eligible
- R15 intended to be only NIH research grant
 - Eligible:
 - Also serve as Key Personnel on another grant
 - Not Eligible:
 - PI of other NIH research grants at time of award
 - Also serve as Multiple PI on another NIH research grant at time of award
 - Research is broadly defined
 - Research ≠ conference, training, construction grants



Example: You have 2 projects

- One is exploratory and fits R21. One fits R15.
- Can you submit them both?
- Both get fundable scores.
- Will NIH fund both?
- Can the R15 change PIs and be funded?
 - Can the R15 drop one Multiple PI and be funded?



Example: Your MPI has 2 projects

- Sam and Dean get a 10 on their MPI R15;
- Sam, Jo, Ellen get a 10 on their MPD/MPI R03, which is awarded
- Will Sam and Dean's R15 be awarded?
 - Can Sam drop to a collaborator on the R15 and have the R15 awarded?
 - Can Sam drop to a collaborator on the R03 and have the R15 awarded?



National Institutes of Health

Second Most Common Question

- Can I have an ineligible collaborator?
 - At ineligible institution
 - At ineligible component on home campus *or*
 - At another site
 - or*
 - PI of their own NIH research grant



National Institutes of Health

Can I Have An Ineligible Collaborator?

- Eligibility answer: Yes
- Merit answer: **But**
 - Majority of research should be directed by PI at grantee institution
 - Student profile & student inclusion are for applicant/eligible component
 - Consider the unique goals and criteria of the R15
 - No one can predict what level of involvement will be seen as counter to the R15 goals



After The Award: Progress Report

- **Must list students in Section D - Participants, not just mention in research update**
- Students who worked at least 1 person month per year even if unpaid must be listed
 - And must have Commons ID
- They should complete Commons Person Profile
- *Crucial* to tracking students and determining success of AREA program as a whole



National Institutes of Health

Strategies For Success

- **Institution**
- **Investigator**



National Institutes of Health

Build A Vital Research Environments

- Understand the NIH extramural research program
 - Know guidelines, deadlines, submission & correction process, and review criteria
 - Create an environment in which grants office can succeed
 - Training
 - Protected time
 - Support to set expectations
- Make a commitment to establishing an environment in which research can succeed
 - Start up packages for equipment and supplies
 - Pilot grants, student research grants
 - Credit for student involvement in research



National Institutes of Health

Strategies of Successful PIs

- Address the AREA-specific programmatic goals in the application; these are reflected in review criteria
 - Support meritorious research
 - Research should contribute to the field
 - Results should be publishable
 - Expose students to research
 - Profile of available and former students at the institution
 - Experience of the investigator in working with students
 - How students will be incorporated into the research project
 - How students will benefit from this research experience
 - Strengthen the research environment
 - The suitability of the institution for an award
 - The impact the AREA grant will have on the institution



There Is No Winning Formula

- ❖ No one can give specifics of what will score well
- ❖ Do not treat a successful [or not] application as an iron-clad template [of what not to do]
 - How many students
 - How many papers
 - What % of a collaborator
 - What % of special facilities
 - What amount or type of institutional support
 - What type of environment



National Institutes of Health

Resources

- AREA Program Facebook page
 - Like us on Facebook
 - <https://www.facebook.com/NIHAreaProgram>
- AREA Program FAQs
 - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area_faq.htm
- AREA mailbox
 - R151@mail.nih.gov
- Institute/Center contacts
 - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/contacts/parent_R15.html
- Strategic plans
 - <http://report.nih.gov/strategicplans/>



Questions?



National Institutes of Health