Questions and Answers About NIH Grants

What is the NIH?

NIH is the National Institutes of Health, based in Rockville, Maryland. It includes 27 sub-agencies organized around specific professional disciplines and health-related concerns. Selected agencies are listed below.

To which NIH sub-agencies should I apply?

AHRQ – The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality’s mission is to produce evidence to make health care safer, higher quality, more accessible, equitable, and affordable, and to work within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and with other partners to make sure that the evidence is understood and used.

NIA – The National Institute of Aging leads a broad scientific effort to understand the nature of aging and to extend the healthy, active years of life. The agency provides leadership in aging research, training, health information dissemination, and other programs relevant to aging and older people. NIA is the primary federal agency to conduct Alzheimer’s disease research.

NIAAA – The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism leads the nation’s research efforts on alcohol use and abuse.

NIAID – The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease conducts and supports basic and applied research to better understand, treat, and ultimately prevent infectious, immunologic, and allergic diseases.

NIDA – The National Institute on Drug Abuse brings the power of science to bear on drug abuse and addiction through the strategic support and conduct of research across a broad range of disciplines. The agency also aids the rapid and effective dissemination and use of research results to improve prevention and treatment and to inform policy as it relates to drug abuse and addiction.

NIMH - The mission of the National Institute of Mental Health is to transform the understanding and treatment of mental health through basic and clinical research paving the way for prevention, recovery, and cure.

NIMHD – The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities envisions an America in which all populations will have an equal opportunity to live long, healthy, and productive lives. Its mission is to lead scientific research to improve minority health and eliminate health disparities.

NINR – The mission of the National Institute of Nursing Research is to promote and improve the health of individuals, families, communities, and populations. The institute supports and conducts clinical and basic research and research training on health and illness across the lifespan to build the scientific foundation for clinical practice, prevent disease and disability, manage and eliminate symptoms caused by illness, and improve palliative and end-of-life care.

This is not an exhaustive list; School of Social Work faculty may want to apply to other NIH sub-agencies or centers. For a list of other agencies and centers that may have funding opportunities, see list of websites listed on page 4.
To which specific grant mechanisms should I apply?

NIH grants include prefix codes which reflect the different types of applications. These include:

- **P** – Program / Project Grants
- **T** – Training Awards
- **K** – Career Development
- **U** – Cooperative Agreements

The most common grants include the prefix "R" for research. Some of the most common R mechanisms are:

- **R01** - Research Project
- **R03** - Small Research Project Grant
- **R15** - Academic Research Enhancement Award
- **R21** - Exploratory Development Grant
- **R25** - Education Research Project/Training Award
- **R34** - Clinical Trial Award

The R15 mechanism is important to note, because it targets small-scale research projects at underfunded academic institutions. Storrs has determined that the School of Social Work fits this criteria. For more on the R15 mechanism, follow the link - NIH R15 mechanisms

There are also K mechanisms in grant submissions. K awards are research, career development and training focused, however, K Awards are agency specific. Follow this link to find out more - K Awards at NIH.

What is an FOA?

FOA is a Funding Opportunity Announcement, issued periodically by the NIH. FOAs are usually focused on a particular topic area and are institute and mechanism specific. Most FOAs are what the NIH calls Program Announcements (PAs), which have ongoing submission deadlines. A Request for Proposal (RFP) involves a limited submission with specific deadlines and letters of intent.

When are applications due?

Each type of grant has a standard deadline. For specifics, see this link entitled Standard Due Dates for Completing Applications. The NIH recently revised deadlines for all research or R series grants that are non-HIV related. Standard deadlines are:

- **Non-HIV Related Grants** – February, June, and October
- **HIV-Related Grants** – January, May, and September

Which form do I need to complete my application?

The standard NIH form is the SF424, which is available online. This form recently changed, so it is important to confirm that you have the latest version of the SF424. There are specific forms that need to be completed for UConn prior to submission. These are available at the Office of the Vice President for Research OVPR in Storrs and you may contact the Office of Research and Scholarship at the School of Social Work with any questions. Information about UConn Research Proposal Preparation Guidelines is available by following this hyperlink.
What is the secret to a successful grant proposal?
Successful proposals start with a well-defined research problem and solution. To clarify your problem and solution, write a concept piece, which summarizes your project as concisely as possible. Get feedback by sharing the piece with colleagues, including those outside of your immediate circle and comfort zone.

The first part of the grant proposal is the “specific aims” page, which explores the project’s objectives. This should be written long before the grant deadline and shared with a program officer at the funding agency to which you are applying.

The program officer can provide constructive suggestions for improvement, and guide you as you complete the research plan. For specific guidance on research planning, follow this Research Planning link.

The Office of Scholarship and Research at the School of Social Work can also share examples of successful models.

How long does the grant process take?
After a grant is submitted electronically, it goes to the Center for Scientific Review. It is assigned to a relevant review committee, which will read it within three months for HIV related grants and four months for other grants. After the review, the applicant receives a summary statement. If the full review committee sees merit in the grant, you will receive a score. For an explanation of the scoring process, see NIH Scoring Process.

It is common for grants to be unscored the first they are submitted, but applicants may rework and resubmit their proposals. The NIH has relaxed its resubmission rules, which has increased an applicant’s opportunities to respond to critiques. Up to two amended applications can be resubmitted.

What is an ERA Commons Account, and why do I need one?
This account holds all information that the NIH provides to you as a grant submitter. It includes review assignments, summary statements, and grant scores, as well as your biographical information, including publications and job titles. If you plan to apply for an NIH grant, create this account as soon as possible. OVPR at Storrs will do this for you.

Why should I apply for NIH grants?
NIH grants are among the most prestigious of all funding opportunities. They generally provide large amounts of financial support for research activities with a promise of building better science while bettering the health and welfare of people.

They also come with substantial indirect funds, which provide infrastructure support to the school and university. Success rates have been low in recent years, especially among young investigators; it can take several years before a submitted proposal actually achieves funding. But persistence can pay off. Most well conceived ideas ultimately get funded.

The NIH is increasingly aware of the need to support underfunded schools and colleges, and the importance of nurturing new investigators. This bodes well for potential success for grant applications from the School of Social Work.
Useful Links to NIH Sub-Agencies

AHRQ:  www.ahrq.gov/funding/index.html
FIC:  www.fic.nih.gov/funding/Pages/default.aspx
NCATS:  www.ncats.nih.gov/funding
NEI:  https:// nei.nih.gov/
NHGRI:  www.genome.gov/ResearchAtNHGRI/
NHLBI:  www.nhlbi.nih.gov/research/funding
NIA:  www.nia.nih.gov/research/funding
NIAAA:  www.niaaa.nih.gov/grant-funding/funding-opportunities
NIAID:  www.niaid.nih.gov/researchfunding/grant/pages/default.aspx
NIAMS:  www.niams.nih.gov/research/
NIBIB:  www.nibib.nih.gov/funding
NICHD:  www.nichd.nih.gov/grants-funding/opportunities-mechanisms/Pages/default.aspx
NIDA:  www.drugabuse.gov/funding/funding-opportunities
NIDDK:  www.niddk.nih.gov/research-funding/Pages/default.aspx
NIEHS:  www.niehs.nih.gov/funding/
NIGMS:  www.nigms.nih.gov/Research/Pages/default.aspx
NIMHD:  www.nimhd.nih.gov/funding.html
NINDS:  www.ninds.nih.gov/research/
NINR:  www.ninr.nih.gov/researchandfunding
NLM:  www.nlm.nih.gov/grants.html
Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR):  obssr.od.nih.gov/funding_opportunities/foas/foas.aspx
Office of Disease Prevention (ODP):  prevention.nih.gov/tobacco-regulatory-science-program/funding-opportunities

Federal Grant Sites

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)  
www.acf.hhs.gov/grants
Centers for Disease Control (CDC)  
www.cdc.gov
Federal Grants:  www.grants.gov
Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA)  
bhppr.hrsa.gov/grants/
National Cancer Institute (NCI)  
www.cancer.gov/grants-training
National Child Welfare Workforce Institute (NCWWI)  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services (SAMHSA)  
www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements-2015
The Science of Organizations (SoO) (NSF):  
www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504696&org=SES&sel_org=SES&from=fund

Mystery Solved......

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NEW!! - UConn Sponsored Program Services offers a number of online and in-person grant writing resources specifically for Federal Grants (NIH & NSF).

You can find out more about these resources by visiting the SPS weblink: http://research.uconn.edu/training/grant-writing-support/