Multiple Principal Investigator Guidance to Reviewers

Background

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has begun to implement a Federal-wide policy to allow formally more than one Principal Investigator (PI) on individual research awards. This presents a new and important opportunity for investigators seeking support for projects or activities that clearly require a "team science" approaches and which do not fit the single-PI model. Increasingly, health-related research involves teams that vary in terms of size, hierarchy, location of participants, goals, disciplines, and structure. There is growing consensus that team science would be encouraged if more than one PI could be recognized on individual awards. The multiple-PI model is intended to supplement, and not to replace, the traditional single PI model. The overarching goal is to encourage collaboration among equals when that is the most appropriate way to address a scientific problem.

It is expected that the multiple-PI option will become available for most electronic grant applications (SF424) submitted for January 2007 and later application receipt dates. In addition, some Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) submitted using the PHS 398 will use the multiple-PI option.

The following sections represent the major changes in the multiple PI grant applications

- The PHS 398 and SF 424 forms have been modified to accommodate information on more than one PI.
- Each of the listed PIs will be designated by the grantee institution and will be expected to share responsibility for directing the project or activity. As in current applications, peer reviewers will consider whether the designated PIs have appropriate training and experience to carry out the proposed study.
- To facilitate communication with the NIH, the institution will be asked to select a "Contact PI" at the time of application. The Contact PI will be responsible for relaying communications between all of the PIs and the NIH. Being named Contact PI will not confer any special authority or responsibility for the project.
- Information on the identity of each PI will be stored in NIH databases and will appear in official reports.
- The NIH will ask for a Leadership Plan (e.g., Section I in PHS398 forms, Section 14 in SF424 Research Plan) to describe: the governance and organizational structure of the leadership team, including communication plans, process for making decisions on scientific direction, and procedures for resolving conflicts.
- Review criteria for "Approach" and "Investigators" have been modified. The quality of the Leadership Plan will be considered by peer reviewers as part of the assessment of scientific and technical merit.

More information is available on the Multiple Principal Investigator web site: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/index.htm