

FAQ for the Interdisciplinary Research Consortia

1) Why has a consortium approach been adopted rather than use a comprehensive center mechanism like a P50?

While the other Interdisciplinary Research Roadmap initiatives focused on individual investigators, the Consortia initiative is specifically intended to facilitate and support team approaches to interdisciplinary research. Over several years, through many formal and informal venues, NIH has received significant input from the research communities representing the full spectrum of NIH-relevant science on what conditions favor team science. Among the most important of these is that appropriate recognition and responsibility be provided key investigators on a team, as well as to their institutions. The consortium approach allows for such recognition and responsibility in ways that other available mechanisms do not.

2) Why are the components of the consortium going to be managed by various Institutes/Centers (ICs) at NIH rather than by one IC?

While an important part of the NIH Roadmap is aimed at providing novel opportunities for investigators, another component of the Roadmap is to change the way that NIH does business in order to better accommodate a changing scientific landscape. And, just as appropriate recognition and responsibility are important to those receiving support for team science, these elements also facilitate team science from the perspective of those responsible for oversight and management. Each consortium will be managed by a team of project officers from multiple Institutes and Centers. Such a management arrangement is unusual at NIH, but successful management of these consortia will require the diverse expertise in these project teams.

3) I am working on a clinical problem. Should I apply for an Interdisciplinary Consortium or for one of the new Clinical and Translational Science Awards?

Many of the [P20 centers](#) that were funded under in the initial phase of this program are trying to solve a clinical problem, however the focus of this program is on interdisciplinary research. In contrast, the focus of the [Clinical and Translational Science Awards](#) is on creating a home for clinical and translational research.

4) I am considering including an R21 application in my consortium. What will happen to the money for that part of the consortium in the third year when the R21 is complete?

Applicants have a number of issues when dealing with the budgets for a consortium. The budgets for each consortium cannot exceed \$2,800,000 in year 1 and cannot exceed \$3,000,000 in years 2-5 (all numbers direct costs). If the R21 requested \$125,000 in years 1 and 2, that amount could be made available to cover inflationary increases in the R01 budgets starting in year 3. The funds could also be used in a P30 for the core projects

starting in year 3. Alternatively, a K01 or an R25 or a second R21 award could be scheduled to start in year 3. Those late starting applications will have to be included in the consortium package when it is submitted.

5) What role does the U54 play in the application and how should the U54 PI be viewed.

Although the U54 application will not be large financially, this application is, in some ways, the heart of the consortium proposal. In this application, the team will describe the problem to be addressed and the interdisciplinary approach to solving the problem. An important component of the U54 is a description of how the group will function, including the operational and scientific relationships among the different parts of the consortium. Such a description is especially important since the awards will be linked, but will be formally independent from each other. The U54 will also be the lead in keeping the different components working together, using contemporary project management strategies and tactics. The U54 PI is the overall voice of the consortium, and is expected to understand and speak for the “big picture” goals, but does not have the same formal control over the consortium as would be true with a comprehensive center award.

6) How critical are the research components of the consortium to the success of the application?

These are research consortia, so research components are supremely important. While training, education, and career development mechanisms are available, the focus of a successful application must be on interdisciplinary research into a challenging problem.

7) Is it possible to link previously funded awards with an interdisciplinary center application?

It is not possible to move a current award directly into a consortium. However, it is possible to use the competitive supplement mechanism to add an interdisciplinary component to a previously funded award and thereby tie the previous award to the new consortium. Details of such competitive supplements can be found in the RFA.

8) Will there be future program announcements that will allow funded consortia to grow?

At this point, there are no plans to have future program announcements specifically aimed at establishing new awards for funded consortia. However, it will certainly be possible for applicants to submit unsolicited R01s or R21s at the usual deadlines that collaborate with projects and make use of the resources of the consortia in the same manner that scientists routinely collaborate with each other.

9) How is the review of the full consortia applications going to be done?

The details of the review will depend on the number and research areas of the groups that are invited to submit full consortia applications. A special emphasis panel or panels will be created to conduct the review of these applications. Applicants will be able to provide input on the types of reviewers that would be suitable for their application using a cover letter.

10) Are multiple investigators going to be permitted on the components of a consortium?

NIH is working toward recognizing [Multiple Principal Investigators](#) on individual awards. Much of the work of the committees working on recognizing multiple PIs is focused on recognizing the members of a team who are participating in research supported by a single award. This Interdisciplinary Consortia program represents a second way to recognize multiple PIs in the context of a large program. The individual components of the consortium will each have a PI, but it seems likely that these PIs will have roles in other components of the consortium.

11) Where can I get information about the electronic submission process that is required for PAR-06-122?

Applicants should start at the [Electronic Submission of Grant Applications](#) Web site. The training, SF 424 (R&R), and Tips and Tools sections of that Web site have very important information for applicants about the electronic submission requirements.

12) Can I submit letters of support with my pre-application?

You should not submit letters of support with the pre-applications. The only letters in the application should be from institutional officials answering the questions raised in the program announcement. If you add letters of support in the same PDF file as the letters from institutional officials, it will be hard for the reviewers to find the letters that they need.