

A7: Reasons the University Requires a Detailed Budget

(85.7% said their institution requires a detailed budget from the PIs)

Main Themes:

- Information is needed for accounting system, finance department, and/or internal planning and it's easier to set up the accounting (for the detailed budget) during the proposal stage
- PIs need to develop a detailed budget to help plan their research; they need to think through the process (esp. budgeting salaries) which will help them determine what they need to request
- Ensure all costs are accounted for and that there is no financial risk to the institution; make sure the PI includes the correct rates, all needed costs, etc.
- Helps departments monitor their expenditures; need to know what commitments were made by the PI, and that they don't overcommit personnel and resources
- Need detailed budget to calculate F&A correctly; need to make sure proposals are compliant with A21 regulations

B4: Other Reasons for Implementing Modular Grants

(36.4% said there were additional reasons for implementing modular grants)

Main Themes:

- Focus reviewers on scientific aspects of the grant; saves time during the review process
- Reduce administrative burden for NIH staff
- Provide more flexibility to PIs with the funds that are awarded

Additional Comments:

- Puts more responsibility on the PI's institution

E2b: Raise Modular Grant Limit Beyond \$250K

(Of those that had a preference, 75.5% said they would prefer the limit to be higher than \$250,000)

Main Themes:

- Cost of conducting research has increased (particularly salaries)
- Many projects are just over the \$250,000 limit; raising the limit would allow different kinds of projects to use the modular format and gain the corresponding benefits (such as flexibility of funds)
- Would promote collaboration between different institutions
- PIs will no longer restrict their research to \$250,000 to avoid having to submit a detailed budget to NIH (since some believe the grant has better chance of getting funded if it is modular)
- Easier to have only one budget system; would make guidelines clearer for PIs

Institutional Official Comments

Additional Comments:

- New suggested limit is generally \$300,000

E2c: Keep Modular Grant Limit at \$250K

(Of those that had a preference, 24.5% said they would prefer that the limit not be higher than \$250,000)

Main Themes:

- Most grants fall within the \$250,000 range; current limit is reasonable and acceptable
- Higher grants should require a detailed budget to ensure accountability
- PIs have the option to submit a nonmodular grant if necessary

E3: Reasons for Liking Modular Grants

(80.6% of Institutional Officials made a comment when asked about the aspects of the modular grant application process they like)

Main Themes:

- Flexibility in budgeting and spending funds
- Reduces administrative burden for the PIs; PIs do not have to spend time constructing detailed budget justification; much easier to fill out modular grant budget forms (less paperwork); PIs “love the process”
- Other Support pages are not required
- Institutional officials spend less time having to review budgets for grant proposals; saves time during proposal development process
- Review process is streamlined; reviewers are encouraged to focus on scientific content of grant

E4: Reasons for Disliking Modular Grants

(64.3% of Institutional Officials made a comment when asked about the aspects of the modular grant application process they did not like)

Main Themes:

- Institutional policy still requires PIs to prepare a detailed budget
- Modular process sometimes confuses the PIs (NIH instructions should be clearer)
- Difficult to explain to PI that institution still requires a detailed budget even though NIH doesn't
- Too much flexibility for PIs; some don't monitor funds appropriately and may not adequately plan out project funds in advance
- Having to include consortium/subcontractor costs in direct costs
- Difficult for institutional officials/PIs to calculate indirect costs when no detailed budget is developed
- Difficult to make modular format fit institutional accounting formats; difficult to use module increments in \$25,000

Institutional Official Comments

- Modular grants are limited to \$250,000
- No escalation over the years; does not account for year to year inflation

Additional Comments:

- If a detailed budget is submitted, the grant is penalized; PIs reluctant to use nonmodular format for fear of it not getting funded

F6: Reasons for Liking Just-In-Time

(74.0% of Institutional Officials made comments about Just-in-Time procedures they like)

Main Themes:

- IACUC and IRB approvals not required unless grant may be funded – this reduces administrative burden for PIs and institution staff and limits doing unnecessary work (if the grant is never funded)
- Less paperwork to deal with
- Don't have to have all materials ready at the deadline (already “struggling” to meet deadlines); prevents last minute rush by giving PIs more time to prepare materials; don't have to chase down PIs for approvals at submission time
- Just-in-Time information is more up to date
- Ability to submit materials electronically through NIH Commons
- Don't have to submit other support information at the time the proposal is due
- Allows PI to focus on the science in the grant; don't have to worry about approvals

F7: Reasons for Disliking Just-In-Time

(58.6% of Institutional Officials made comments about Just-in-Time procedures they do not like)

Main Themes:

- Short turn-around between notification and when JIT materials need to be submitted to NIH; takes time to get IRB, IACUC approval;
- Big rush/mad scramble toward the end and funding can get held up
- Lack of coordination and communication at NIH – consistently have to submit materials to several different people and/or several different times; poor document tracking at NIH
- Inadequate notification to institution about need to submit JIT materials (for example, sometimes only the PI is notified); NIH accepts documents directly from the PI without institution verification
- Problems with electronic submission (NIH Commons); difficult for some NIH staff to access Commons; issues with NIH Commons have resulted in having to submit hard copy materials after previously submitting them electronically
- Sometimes a PI receives a JIT request and is not funded – despite disclaimers, this is very disappointing and demoralizing for the PI