

Center for Scientific Review

National Institutes of Health

Referral & Review

REVIEW OF NEW INVESTIGATOR R01s

Guidelines for Reviewers

New investigators are important to the future of biomedical research and, in fairness, should be reviewed in the context of their level of experience. A new investigator is one who has not previously served as a principal investigator on any PHS-supported research project other than a small grant (R03), an Academic Research Enhancement Award (R15), or an exploratory/developmental grant (R21); serving as principal investigator on these mechanisms does not affect new investigator status.

In the rare cases in which new investigators have assumed responsibility as the principal investigator of an on-going PHS-supported research project including an R01, this does not affect their new investigator status. They are still considered new investigators when they submit either a competitive renewal of the project or a new application of their own.

Research career awards associated principally with physicians, dentists, or veterinarians at the beginning of their research career (K01, K08, K22, and K23) do not affect new investigator status either. However, Independent Scientist and other non-mentored career awards (K02 and K04) do affect new investigator status; current or past recipients of these awards are not considered new investigators.

NIH application forms have a check box to indicate new investigator status so that reviewers can readily identify applications from new investigators. The biosketch should also be used to identify new investigators since many new investigators fail to check the box on the application. New investigators are typically less experienced in the preparation of applications, their publications will be more limited, and their research plans may not be as fully developed. All applications should be evaluated in a manner appropriate for the stage in the principal investigator's career.

IMPLEMENTATION: When reviewing these applications, reviewers should keep in mind the more limited experience of and resources available to new investigators.—Specifically, when considering:

Approach: More emphasis should be placed on demonstrating that the techniques/approaches are feasible than on preliminary results that develop a hypothesis. Assessment of feasibility should be based more on rationale and training than on preliminary experimental data.

Investigators: More emphasis should be placed on training and research potential than on track record and number of publications.

Environment: The application should provide evidence that the necessary space, equipment, and time to perform the research are available to the principal investigator.

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