Notice of Special Interest: Administrative Supplements to Participate in the NCI Early-stage Surgeon Scientist Program (ESSP)
Notice Number:
NOT-CA-21-100

Key Dates

Release Date:
August 2, 2021
First Available Due Date:
December 08, 2021
Expiration Date:
December 09, 2023

Related Announcements

PA-20-272 - Administrative Supplements to Existing NIH Grants and Cooperative Agreements (Parent Admin Supp Clinical Trial Optional).

Issued by

National Cancer Institute (NCI)

All applications to this funding opportunity announcement should fall within the mission of the Institutes/Centers. The following NIH Offices may co-fund applications assigned to those Institutes/Centers.

Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)

Purpose

This Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) from the National Cancer Institute (NCI) announces an opportunity for administrative supplement funding to support and train early-stage surgeon scientists conducting cancer-related research and with the goal to accelerate them into an independent surgeon scientist career. The NCI will support exceptional surgeon scientists from across the United States who have not received prior substantial NIH funding to be trained together by participating in the NCI Early-stage Surgeon Scientist Program (ESSP).

Background

Overall, physician scientists have decreased from 4.7% of the workforce to 1.5% since the 1980s. Reasons cited include: relative diminished NIH funding for more than 2 decades, economic pressures to be clinically productive, excessive administrative responsibilities, difficulty obtaining extramural funding, and desire for
work-life balance. However, physician scientists are the key to transforming patient care. They can maximally leverage their clinical acumen to identify underlying biology and address clinical needs.

Surgeons are particularly challenged as surgeon scientists by the need to remain surgically active, operating and seeing patients in clinic, by the fact that hospital margins are dependent upon procedure-based medicine, and that NIH salary caps do not account for surgeon salaries. And, yet, they have made many transformative scientific discoveries.

**Overall Goal**

The overall goal of this program is to train surgeon scientists and retain them in cancer research by supporting a program focused on cancer-related disease and basic/translational research. This program aims to bring together surgeon scientists from across the United States and build cohorts that will be trained together for up to three years per cohort. Participants in the Early-stage Surgeon Scientist Program (ESSP-Participants or Participants) from the extramural community will be selected via a competitive process after submitting an administrative supplement application for a P30 Cancer Center Support grant or U54 Comprehensive Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Equity (CPACHE) program grant. NCI Intramural surgeon scientists may also apply to participate in the program. Timelines and milestones will be tracked for Participants for 1) manuscript submissions, 2) grant proposal submissions and obtaining additional funding, 3) national presentations, and 4) progress reports. Each participant will be advised by a mentoring committee consisting of content experts from academic medical centers and the NCI and NIH. The second and third years of support for participants will be contingent on achieving sufficient progress towards these milestones, as described below. In addition, annual surveys of Participants and their mentors will be used to improve program organization, educational sessions, and outcome metrics.

**Program Structure**

The 5-year pilot program will support a total of 36 early-career surgeon scientist program Participants, each of whom will receive three years of funding in three cohorts of 12 Participants per cohort, staggered a year apart. Funding of up to $125,000 in direct costs will be provided annually for extramural grantees, to support 6 person months effort of the Participants and other allowable costs including travel and support for research training activities. The Participants will be funded through an administrative supplement to the grantee’s NCI-designated Cancer Center Support Grant (P30) or Comprehensive Partnerships to Advance Cancer Health Equity (CPACHE; U54) to one of the institutions serving underserved health disparity populations and underrepresented students (ISUPSs); see budget below for details. Each cohort will be comprised of primarily extramural surgeons. NCI Intramural surgeons are also eligible. **Only one candidate per P30, one ISUPS candidate per CPACHE U54 Program, and one candidate per intramural NCI Branch may be nominated to apply by the Center director or Branch Chief per cohort.**

**Curriculum**

NCI will sponsor quarterly professional development symposia to include grant writing seminars, content area mentoring, scientific methods curriculum and more.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion**

Additional announcements of the program to underrepresented minority surgeon populations will be made through collaboration with external organizations, such as professional surgical associations. Diversity,
equity, and inclusion should also be a factor in recruiting mentors for the Participants to ensure that the ESSP community reflects these values.

**Office of Research on Women’s Health (ORWH)**

The mission of the ORWH is to advance research for the health of women and to recruit, retain, and advance women in biomedical careers. Advancing science for the health of women requires a well-trained, diverse, and robust workforce, which is the engine of scientific progress. In support of this initiative, ORWH is particularly interested in applications from underrepresented surgeon populations including women. The 2019-2023 NIH wide Strategic Plan for the Health of Women “Advancing Science for the Health of Women” identifies guiding principles and objectives to promote training and careers that increase gender diversity in the biomedical research workforce at all career levels including early stage scientists as they transition to independent research careers and leadership positions. ([https://www.nih.gov/women/strategicplan](https://www.nih.gov/women/strategicplan))

**ESSP-Participant Milestones**

Second and third years of funding will be dependent on achieving sufficient progress towards milestones that are appropriate for the Participant’s career stage. These milestones include: 1) acceptance of either an abstract at a society meeting or a manuscript by a journal; 2) submission of an NIH grant application; 3) submission of a non-NIH grant application; 4) participation in all professional development sessions offered by the ESSP. Intramural Physician-Scientist Early Investigators will be expected to submit an internal NIH proposal and a non-NIH grant.

**Evaluation Metrics**

The pilot program will be evaluated annually for outcomes, by administering participant surveys, conducting exit interviews of Participants completing the ESSP, and collecting academic activity from participants and alumni.

**Application and Submission Information**

Applications to support extramural candidates must be submitted using the following opportunity or its subsequent reissued equivalent:

**PA-20-272** - Administrative Supplements to Existing NIH Grants and Cooperative Agreements (Parent Admin Supp Clinical Trial Optional).

All instructions in the [SF424 (R&R) Application Guide](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/sf424/sf424.htm) and the funding opportunity announcement used for submission must be followed, with the following additions:

**Eligibility and Eligible Institutions:**

Active NCI P30 Cancer Center or CPACHE U54 Center ISUPS awardees are eligible to apply. Future years may be contingent upon successful renewal of the parent award.

**Not Eligible:**

Centers which will enter an extension year during the fiscal year in which this award will be made are not eligible to apply for the supplement since new administrative supplements cannot be paid to grants in an
extension year. Contact the NCI program director if a renewal application is pending to determine eligibility.

**Eligibility and Eligible Individuals (ESSP-Participant Candidate):**

**ESSP-Participant Candidate Requirements:**

- Must be a U.S.-licensed surgeon scientist with active surgical duties at an NCI-designated Cancer Center (P30) or an ISUPS funded by a CPACHE U54 or be a Physician Early Investigator at NCI.
- Must be within the first 1-3 years of tenure-track academic appointment and must conduct research on cancer-related basic or translational science.
- Must commit a minimum of 6 person-months (50% full-time professional effort) to the ESSP award.
- Current and/or former PDs/PIs on any NIH awards are not eligible candidates, with the following exceptions:
  - PD/PIs of NIH Fellowships, PD/PIs of Loan Repayment Program (LRP) awards, and individuals appointed to institutional T programs (T32). These individuals remain eligible candidates.
- Fostering diversity in the scientific research workforce is a key component of the NIH strategy to identify, develop, support and maintain the quality of our scientific human capital ([NOT-OD-20-031](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html)). Applicants are encouraged to identify candidates who will enhance diversity on a national basis.
- Candidates who are or become disabled during the current project period may request funds for reasonable accommodations to permit completion of the proposed supplement research project, including for example, special equipment, an assistant, or other modifications.
- Supplemental awards under this announcement are limited to citizens or non-citizen nationals of the United States or to individuals who have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States (i.e., in possession of a Permanent Resident Card, Form I-551).
- Since applications submitted to this announcement will only receive administrative review by the NCI and will not receive peer review, the NIH policy on resubmission applications will not apply.
- Applicants who do not have three years remaining in their current award should contact NCI staff for instructions.
- Support under the supplement is not transferable to another individual.
- There will be three annual application due dates during the pilot phase of the ESSP program. If a candidate is not selected, they may be nominated to reapply for the program the following year.
- If funded, the applicant must provide annual progress reports (refer to Reporting Requirements section below).

**Nomination:**

The candidate must be nominated by the Center Director (Principal Investigator (PI) of the P30 CCSG or PI of the U54 CPACHE) based on the candidate’s qualifications, interests, accomplishments, motivation and plans to pursue a career as a surgeon scientist with a focus on cancer-related research.

**Number of Applications:**

- Only one submission per year per NCI-designated Cancer Center made through the PI of the P30 is permitted (consortium centers may submit only one application) and one submission per year per CPACHE program made through the PI of the U54 is permitted. The CPACHE U54 PI may only nominate one candidate from one of the CPACHE institutions serving underserved health disparity populations and underrepresented students (ISUPSS). The NCI-designated Cancer Center must apply for a P30 supplement; the CPACHE ISUPS must apply for a U54 supplement.
- Only one submission per intramural NCI Branch will be considered each year.

**Budget:**

Each parent award supplement budget request cannot exceed $125,000 in direct costs. In addition, the budget cannot exceed the direct costs of the current parent award.

Requests are permitted for three years of support only. Applicants who do not have three years remaining in their current award should contact NCI staff for instructions.

The earliest anticipated start date is March 1, 2022.

**Allowable costs** are limited to:

- Salary of the Participant, which must be compliant with NIH salary cap. Candidate must commit a minimum of 6 person months effort.
- Support for research personnel.
- Research consumables and career development for the Participant.
- Travel budget for Participant only, up to $2,000 per year.

**Body of the Application**

- **NIH Biosketch of ESSP-Participant candidate and mentors:** The Biographical Sketch Format Page is available at [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm).
- **Candidate Section** (5 pages) *(add as Other Attachment or as part of Research Strategy).*

**Career Goals and Objectives**

- Describe a systematic plan that: (1) shows a logical progression from prior research and training experiences to the research and career development experiences that will occur during the career award period and then to independent investigator status; (2) justifies the need for further career development to become an independent investigator; and (3) outlines milestones and timelines for manuscript submissions, grant proposal submissions, presentations at national meetings, and other academic achievements.

**Coursework and Professional Development Plan**

- The candidate and the mentor(s) are jointly responsible for the preparation of the career professional development plan. A career development timeline must be outlined.
- The didactic (if any) and the research aspects of the plan must be designed to develop the necessary knowledge and research skills in scientific areas relevant to the candidate's career goals.
- Describe the professional responsibilities/activities including other research projects beyond the minimum required 6 person-months (50% full-time professional effort) commitment to the ESSP award. Explain how these responsibilities/activities will help ensure career progression to achieve independence as an investigator.
- Detailed plans for submission for cancer-related research funding beginning the first year of ESSP funding and, over the next 3 years.
• Plans for society abstract submissions; specify dates if known.
• Plans for manuscript submissions.

• Mentor Section (2-5 pages) (add as Other Attachment or as part of Research Strategy).

Plans and Statements of Mentor and Co-mentor(s)

• The candidate must name a primary mentor who, together with the candidate, is responsible for planning, directing, monitoring, and executing the proposed program. The candidate may also nominate co-mentors as appropriate to the goals of the program.
• The mentor should have sufficient independent research support to cover the costs of the proposed research project in excess of the allowable costs of this award.
• Include a statement that the candidate will commit at least 6 person-months (50% of full-time professional effort) to the career development program and related career development activities.
• The application must include a statement from the mentor providing: 1) information on his/her research qualifications and previous experience as a research supervisor; 2) a plan that describes the nature of the supervision and mentoring that will occur during the proposed award period; 3) a plan for career progression for the candidate to move from the mentored stage of his/her career to independent research investigator status during the project period of the award; and 4) a plan for monitoring the candidate's research, publications, and progression towards independence.
• Similar information must be provided by any co-mentor. If more than one co-mentor is proposed, the respective areas of expertise and responsibility of each should be described. Co-mentors should clearly describe how they will coordinate the mentoring of the candidate. If any co-mentor is not located at the sponsoring institution, a statement should be provided describing the mechanism(s) and frequency of communication with the candidate, including the frequency of face-to-face meetings.
• The primary mentor must agree to write and provide annual evaluations of the candidate's progress as required in the annual progress report.
• If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research career development, the mentor or a member of the mentoring team must include a statement to document leadership of the clinical trial, and appropriate expertise to guide the applicant in any proposed clinical trials research experience.

• Specific Aims (1 page)
• Research Plan: in NIH Grant format, including research milestones to be met and the timeframe within which these will be met (5 pages)
• Budget (refer to Budget section for allowable costs): for the person months of effort for the Participant during each of the three years, with appropriate justification. If the Center current period of performance will end prior to year 3 of the ESSP, include a projected budget for year 3.
• Letters of Support
  1. Letter from the Chair of Surgery or Branch Chief outlining the details of financial support and mechanisms to assure at least 50% protected time for research training and career development, candidate-specific goals, and curriculum for the Participant.
  2. Letter from the P30 or U54 Center Director.
  3. Letter from the primary mentor.

Application Due Dates:

Applications must be submitted by the Application Due Dates of December 8, 2021, December 8, 2022, and
December 8, 2023, until 5:00 PM local time of applicant organization, for possible funding in FY2022, FY2023, and FY2024, respectively.

Additionally, when the application has been submitted, please notify the program director for the parent Center award that it has been submitted, but please do not send the application itself.

The Expiration Date of this NOSI is December 9, 2023.

However, continuation of this NOSI is contingent upon availability of funds, and the NOSI may be terminated before the current expiration date.

**Submitting Applications:**

- Applications must be submitted electronically via eRA Commons to the parent award (P30 or U54) using [PA-20-272](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/PA-20-272.html) - Administrative Supplements to Existing NIH Grants and Cooperative Agreements (Parent Admin Supp Clinical Trial Optional).
- Applicants should begin the supplement application abstract by stating “This application is being submitted in response to the Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) identified as NOT-CA-21-100.”
- For funding consideration, applicants must include “NOT-CA-21-100” (without quotation marks) in the Agency Routing Identifier field (box 4b) of the SF424 R&R form. Applications without this information in box 4b will not be considered for this initiative.
- Page limits: The Research Strategy section of the application is limited to 5 pages.

**Reporting Requirements:**

A progress report for the ESSP supplement must be included as a separately labeled section in the annual progress report for the P30 or U54 Center for any reporting period for which ESSP supplemental funds are received.

The progress report should include the following information related to the ESSP supplement:

- Details on the progress and outcome of each activity/project listed in the application.
- Awards and honors received during the performance period related to activities under this award.
- Publications, journal articles and patents related to this award.
- Impact to date of the award on the Participant’s career development.
- Opportunities that otherwise would not have been possible without the award.
- Value added by the award (e.g., for the institution or other staff).

Publications resulting from this award should acknowledge the funding source as follows: “This study was supported in whole or in part by funding from the Early-stage Surgeon Scientist Program (ESSP) awarded by the National Cancer Institute though a supplement to P30 CA (or U54 CA) <<insert grant number>>.”

Publications, journal articles and/or patents produced under an NIH award-supported project must bear an acknowledgment and disclaimer, as appropriate, as provided in NIH Grants Policy Statement Part II: Terms and Conditions of NIH Grant Awards Section 8.2 “Administrative Requirements—Availability of Research Results: Publications, Intellectual Property Rights and Sharing Research Resources.”

**Review and Selection Process:**

NCI will conduct administrative reviews of applications and support the most meritorious applications submitted for consideration, based on funds' availability.

ESSP-Participants will be chosen based on candidate and mentor qualifications and institutional research environment.

**Pre-Application Webinar**

The NCI will host a pre-application webinar for this NOSI on September 7, 2021 at 1:00 PM Eastern Time.

NCI staff members involved in the NOSI will provide a brief overview of the program for potential applicants and answer questions from webinar attendees pertinent to preparing applications.

To join the webinar, pre-registration is required through WebEx [via this link](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-CA-21-100.html).

Prospective applicants are encouraged to submit their questions regarding the NOSI requirements in advance of the webinar. Please submit questions by Wednesday, September 1, 2021 to [ncicct@nih.gov](mailto:ncicct@nih.gov) with "NOT-CA-21-100" in the subject line. Attendees will also be able to submit questions during the webinar. Questions submitted early will be answered first.

Participation in this webinar, although encouraged, is optional and is not required for the submission of an application in response to this NOSI. The webinar will be recorded for those who are not able to participate in the live event. The webinar recording along with a document highlighting frequently asked questions and corresponding answers will be [posted here](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-CA-21-100.html).

**Inquiries**

**Scientific/Research Contacts:**

**For Cancer Centers:**

The Program Director for the P30 CCSG Award  
National Cancer Institute (NCI)  
Telephone: 240-276-5000

**For CPACHE Centers:**

The Program Director for the U54 CPACHE Award  
National Cancer Institute (NCI)  
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**For General Inquiries:**

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