PLANNING YOUR FIRST APPLICATION: TOP 5 TIPS

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TIP #1: FIND AN NIH INSTITUTE OR CENTER (IC) HOME FOR YOUR APPLICATION

• Identify ICs that support research/training in your topic area
  o Use Matchmaker tool in NIH RePORTER: https://reporter.nih.gov/
  o Identify by searching NIH websites: https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-institute-center-contact-information
    o Browse strategic plans, portfolio areas, research priorities
  o Use NIH Guide to identify relevant Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs): https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html#/
TIP #2: CONTACT A PROGRAM OFFICIAL (PO)

- Contact relevant POs listed on FOAs, IC websites, or in NIH RePORTER Matchmaker
  - Most POs prefer to be contacted by email rather than a “cold call”
  - Share your Specific Aims/brief project description in advance
    - Helps PO assess “mission-relevance” and fit with FOA
    - May facilitate follow-on discussions
  - Initiate contact early in the application process
  - You may talk to several POs before deciding where to submit
TIP #3: READ AND UNDERSTAND THE FOA

• Confirm which ICs are participating
• Identify eligibility & budget restrictions
• Read the background section to understand priorities
• Read the responsiveness criteria, application instructions, and review criteria to understand requirements and expectations
• Contact appropriate FOA contacts with any questions
  • PO = programmatic questions
  • Grants management = budget or grants policy questions

TIP #4: GET FEEDBACK ON YOUR APPLICATION DRAFT

• Check with the assigned Program Officer (Scientific Contact) for feedback on any revised Specific Aims
• Use institutional resources for finding internal reviewers and/or setting up mock reviews
• Check out resources from professional organizations for external review
• Use your professional network to find trustworthy people to give you feedback prior to submission
TIP #5: DOUBLE CHECK THE TECHNICAL DETAILS

• Check the FOA and (if applicable) Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) for any last-minute changes
• Check the application deadline – submit a few days early
  • View the submitted application for accuracy – *If you cannot view it, NIH cannot review it*
  • Verify correct FOA and NOSI (if applicable)
  • Verify total budget is within limits of FOA and IC
• If there are any warnings or identified errors with the submission, address those issues before the application deadline (5pm local time for your organization)