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
  - Use Matchmaker tool in NIH RePORTER: https://reporter.nih.gov/
  - Identify by searching NIH websites: https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/nih-institute-center-contact-information
    - Browse strategic plans, portfolio areas, research priorities
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)