Special Council Review

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Special Council Review

• Started in 2012
• Applications from PD(s)/PI(s) who already receive large amounts must be considered by the Advisory Council
• The threshold was raised from $1M direct costs to $2M total costs this year
• Only includes Research Project Grants. Resource awards (such as Centers or Cores) and training awards (such as T32s) are excluded.
Why should we re-examine Special Council Review?

The top 10% of investigators in terms of funding are more male, more white and less Hispanic.

And they receive ~40% of all NIH funding.

elife-71712, Lauer & Roychowdhury, 2021
What can we do to reduce this concentration of funding?

- Lower the $ threshold for SCR?
- Lower the payline?
- Require a higher effort level?
- Close eligibility loopholes?
What are other ICs doing?

NIGMS – moving to a broader ‘well-funded investigator’ policy that includes all funding

NINDS – lower payline, lower threshold, include MPI applications, higher minimum effort

NIMH – lower payline, higher minimum effort
Proposed changes:

**Specify criteria for bringing applications to Council**

Application must meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Lower payline – outstanding score (<6th percentile)
- Represent an NICHD priority area
- Enhance workforce diversity
Proposed changes:

Limit effort and duration of well-funded status

Application must meet one or more of the following criteria:

• Require minimum 20% effort on application

• Limit time with >$2M support to 12 months from time of award
Proposed changes

Close a major loophole

Currently: an application with multiple PIs is not flagged for SCR unless ALL the PIs have >$2M in NIH funding

How big is this loophole?

We miss 95% of applications from PIs with >$2M in NIH funding
Discussion