Autism Centers of Excellence (ACE) Program
Frequently Asked Questions (9/13/21 version)

Request for Applications (RFAs)

RFA-HD-22-008: Autism Centers of Excellence: Centers (P50 Clinical Trial Optional)
RFA-HD-22-007: Autism Centers of Excellence: Networks (R01 Clinical Trial Optional)

Please check back for updates.

1. Q: I want to establish an Autism Center or Network (RFA-HD-22-008 and RFA-HD-22-007). Where can I find the announcements?

A: The links to both ACE Centers and ACE Networks RFAs are available at the NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts at:


2. Q: Can the Plan for Enhancing Diverse Perspectives (PEDP) exceed 1-page in length?

A: No, the PEDP must be one-page in length. A PEDP is required as part of the application. Applications with a PEDP that exceeds one-page will be deemed non-compliant and returned to the applicant. Please refer to the PEDP guidance materials (https://braininitiative.nih.gov/about/plan-enhancing-diverse-perspectives-pedp).

3. Q: Is the budget limitation for Network applications $1.5 million in direct costs?

A: Yes. The facilities and administrative (F&A) costs, previously referred to as indirect costs, requested by the consortium participants are not included in the direct cost limitation. Please refer to NIH policy on contract/consortium F&A costs (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-004.html).

4. Q: Are the R01 Network applications submitted as a single R01 application or submitted in parts from each collaborating site?

A: The PI of the Network will submit a single R01 application that includes subcontracts to the collaborating sites and the Data Coordinating Center.
5. Q: May an institution apply for both an ACE Center and participate as an ACE Network with two different Principal Investigators (PIs) (i.e., one institution submits an ACE center application with its investigator serving as the PI, but also participates in an ACE Network application either with a different PI from its institution or as a subcontract of another institution)?

A: Yes.

6. Q: If one Institution proposes an ACE Center and an ACE Network application, it would be cost efficient for them share some resources, especially in recruitment and testing, although the aims and research plans for the Network and the Center projects would be quite different. Is this going to be a problem?

A: Each ACE Network or ACE Center application must stand alone for the purpose of review. Therefore, each application should include budget information for all aspects of the study including subject recruitment and testing. If any ACE Centers and Networks appear to be using the same resource, the NIH program staff will adjust the budget accordingly when funding decisions are made.

7. Q: Must the ACE Center PI be a project lead for at least one project in their application?

A: The ACE RFA does not require the Center PI to also be a project lead for at least one project in their application. The RFA does require that Center and Network PIs contribute at least 20% effort to the ACE Center or Network, across all parts of the application.

8. Q: May an investigator serve as an ACE Center PI and a project PI of a different ACE Center?

A: This is permissible as long as there is no scientific overlap between the two projects, and the total percent effort of the investigator for both activities does not exceed 100%.

9. Q: The ACE RFAs state that one of the required measures is the Vineland II (i.e., the Second Edition of the Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales). However, the Vineland III is now published. Should applicants propose to use the Vineland II as originally directed, or should the newest version, the Vineland III, be used?

A: Applicants should propose to use the Vineland III now that it has been published.
10. Q: The ACE R01 RFA mentions that this funding opportunity solicits applications for ACE "networks" that consist of "multi-sites" focusing on a specific topic of research. Do two sites qualify as a "network" or "multi-site"?

A: There is no minimum or maximum number of sites required for an ACE Network application. However, the purpose of the network is to have multiple collaborating sites focusing on a specific topic of research for optimal design and conduct of studies.

11. Q: Our Clinical Core will be drawing blood and conducting clinical and behavioral evaluations on patients, some of whom might or might not end up meeting criteria for certain behavioral protocols. Is it acceptable for the Clinical Core to have a Human Subjects section?

A: Yes, this is appropriate. If a Core involves working with human subjects, then it needs to address the Human Subjects issues. However, unless the Core recruits human subjects, it does not have to discuss the requirements on inclusion of women, minorities, and children.

12. Q: What is the official due date for the ACE RFA?

A: The application due date for both ACE Center and ACE Network RFAs is November 9th, 2021, by 5:00 PM local time of the applicant organization.

13. Q: Can we request an extension on the application receipt date for the ACE RFA if there are extraordinary circumstances beyond our control? What is the late submission policy for the ACE RFA?

A: Section IV, 4. Submission Dates and Times of both RFAs states, “Applications that miss the due date and time are subjected to the NIH Policy on Late Application Submission.” The information describing when NIH will consider a late application can be found in the NIH Policy on Late Application Submission (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-039.html), which allows for a two-week window of consideration after the application due date. No NIH staff can give advanced permission for late submission. The applicant must include a cover letter with the application indicating why he/she is asking for the two-week window of consideration. This only applies to applications where the applicant’s role is Principal Investigator but not for other roles like co-I, etc. After submission, the NIH Division of Receipt and Referral (DRR), within CSR, will review the cover letter and make a decision on whether or not to allow a late submission.
14. Q: Will NIH accept late applications from applicants affected by COVID-19?

A: For applicants affected by COVID-19, NIH is taking a flexible stance for applications submitted within the standard two-week late policy window (see https://grants.nih.gov/faqs#/covid-19.htm?anchor=question55757). Applicants should include a cover letter with an explanation for the late submission. No NIH staff can give advanced permission for a late submission. The applicant must include a cover letter with the application providing an explanation for late submission (i.e., how you were affected by COVID-19). After submission, the NIH Division of Receipt and Referral (DRR), within CSR, will review the cover letter and make a decision on whether or not to allow a late submission.

15. Q: Will Center applications and Network applications be reviewed by the same Study Section?

A: Since they are two RFAs, the Center and Network applications will be likely reviewed by two different Special Emphasis Panels. The members of the panels may be overlapping.

16. Q: Can my ACE application include work in animal models (rats, mice, flies)?

A: The ACE RFAs do not explicitly prohibit such studies; however, participating institute priorities are focused on human subject studies.

Please send additional questions to Alice Kau at kaua@nih.gov. This FAQ list will be updated periodically.