

Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) T32 Diversity Supplement Program for Pre- and Postdoctoral Candidates

Background

NICHD announces its intent to allow existing NICHD-funded Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Institutional Research Training Grant (T32) programs to apply for supplementary funds to support predoctoral and postdoctoral candidates who meet the NIH criteria for increasing diversity.

A very limited number of supplementary slots will be available in each fiscal year and the number awarded will depend on the number and merit of applications received and the availability of funds. Predoctoral and postdoctoral trainees qualifying for this program include individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from socially, culturally, economically, or educationally disadvantaged backgrounds that have inhibited their ability to pursue a career in health-related research, as detailed in the NIH diversity supplement funding opportunity announcement (FOA), <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-21-071.html>.

Although every competing T32 application requires a diversity recruitment and retention plan, and NICHD takes that requirement seriously in evaluating T32 programs, we also realize that recruitment and retention of diverse candidates can be challenging. Providing more flexibility to add predoctoral or postdoctoral trainees from diverse backgrounds would benefit the whole pool of T32 candidates and improve our T32 programs' track records in recruiting and retaining diverse candidates.

NICHD will continue to support research supplements to promote diversity through the diversity supplement FOA, but this option is not available to NICHD T32 mentors who do not have current qualifying NICHD research funding. Therefore, the NICHD T32 diversity supplement program will provide the opportunity for well-qualified predoctoral and postdoctoral fellows who meet the diversity criteria as outlined in the NIH diversity supplement FOA, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-21-071.html>, to receive research training under an NICHD-funded institutional training grant (T32) when all of its awarded slots have already been filled for the current budget year. Principal Investigators (PIs) of NICHD-funded T32 training grants may apply for supplementary funds to support a diversity trainee for a minimum period of 1 year, and a maximum period as normally provided under the particular T32 program. A very limited number of supplementary slots will be available in each fiscal year. All requests will be evaluated by NICHD extramural staff for their relative merit.

T32 Program Eligibility for a Predoctoral or Postdoctoral Diversity Supplement

The T32 program must be study-section approved for more predoctoral slots, or more postdoctoral slots, depending on the current training status of the candidate to be nominated, than are actually funded by NICHD.

Eligible programs will be notified of their eligibility by an email to the PI each year.

- The T32 program must have at least 1 year of funding remaining at the time of the supplement request. T32 programs under a no-cost extension are not eligible for supplements, and supplements will not be awarded beyond the funded period of a parent T32. The minimum duration of the supplement is 1 year.
- All NICHD-funded slots on the T32 grant must be filled at the time that the supplement request is submitted, *with documentation submitted and accepted by NICHD via X-train*.
- The training experience for the diversity candidate must take place in the laboratory of a previously approved mentor in the T32 program.
- T32 programs that receive an NICHD diversity supplement award are not eligible for another T32 diversity supplement until 5 years have passed since the previous award.

Individual Eligibility for a Supplementary Diversity Predoctoral or Postdoctoral Slot

- Diversity predoctoral or postdoctoral candidates must meet all of the administrative requirements for any trainee supported by a NRSA (e.g., citizenship requirements, payback obligation; please see FAQs at <https://grants.nih.gov/faqs#/research-training-and-career-development.htm> for more information) and must meet the standards for prior training, experience, and commitment to research expected of any other trainee in the T32 program proposing to support them.
- Diversity eligibility will be determined according to the definition used in the in the NIH diversity supplement FOA, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-21-071.html>. Diversity eligibility must be documented in the application by a statement from an institutional official.
- A T32 program may not request a supplementary slot for an otherwise eligible predoctoral or postdoctoral trainee who is appointed to a regular slot on the parent T32 grant, or to another T32 at the same institution, at the time of submission of an NICHD T32 diversity supplement application.
- The training experience for the diversity candidate must take place in the laboratory of a previously approved mentor in the T32 program.

Application Procedure

T32 diversity supplement applicants must use the administrative supplement FOA, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-272.html>, to apply for a T32 diversity supplement, not the diversity supplement FOA referenced herein only to define diversity.

All requests for supplemental slots should be preceded by consultation with NICHD program staff to determine availability of funds and to ascertain the suitability of the candidate. Only NICHD-funded T32 programs that are study-section approved for more predoctoral slots, or more postdoctoral slots, depending on the current training status of the candidate to be nominated, than are actually funded by

NICHD, are eligible for a T32 diversity supplement. Formal applications will be accepted annually with a deadline of **January 15**, and must be submitted electronically under the **administrative supplement FOA** (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-20-272.html> or its re-issue). In addition to other required information, the application must include of a letter of nomination signed by the T32 PI and the authorized institutional official, with a statement of the expected length of time needed for the supplement, as estimated by the expected tenures of trainees in the “regular” T32 slots.

The following must also be included:

- Documentation of the recent efforts of the T32 program to recruit and retain diversity candidates, and a description of the process by which this nominated diversity candidate was identified and selected.
- The NIH biosketch of the diversity candidate, describing prior research experience.
- For predoctoral candidates, the most recent transcript. Transcripts are not required for postdoctoral candidates.
- The NIH biosketch of the proposed T32 mentor of the diversity candidate, with information concerning mentorship experience in the personal statement.
- A statement of the training plan for the candidate (prepared by the T32 PI). If the projected T32 appointment is expected for only 1 year, the PI should provide a justification and outline plans for the candidate to complete their NRSA payback obligation. If longer than 1 year, the PI should justify this according to the program’s normal appointment durations and the expected appointment times of the currently appointed trainees.
- A brief statement of the research plan for the candidate prepared jointly by the proposed T32 mentor and the candidate. In the case of a predoctoral candidate who will do lab rotations before choosing a mentor, the rotation scheme and timeline for choosing a mentor, and some potential research interests, should be identified.
- A brief statement from the candidate describing their career goals and future plans.
- NIH budget page(s) (budget information for support of the diversity candidate only). Allowable costs, including stipend, tuition and fees, training related expenses, and institutional allowance are all dictated by the most recent NRSA funding guidelines (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-22-132.html> or its update).
- A statement of the candidate’s eligibility for a diversity supplement as defined in the NIH diversity supplement FOA, <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-21-071.html>.

These items are meant to document the suitability of the diversity candidate for a training position; therefore, they should be personalized for the individual being nominated. General descriptions of the selection process and research plan taken verbatim from the T32 application are not acceptable. Because NICHD-funded T32 programs were found to be highly meritorious by peer review, the quality of

the overall training program and the other mentors will not be reevaluated during the supplement review process. Therefore, detailed descriptions of the general training program and the biosketches of other T32 mentors should not be included in the supplement application.

Review Criteria

The supplement materials will be subject to administrative review by NICHD extramural staff.

The diversity candidate will be evaluated for the following:

- The quality of their academic record (if predoctoral) and prior research experience and productivity
- Their potential to develop as an independent and productive researcher in biomedical, behavioral, or clinical science, as demonstrated in the training plan

These two aspects should be of roughly the same quality as those of other trainees at the same level who were awarded T32 slots in a particular program.

The overall individual training plan, including coursework, research experiences, and the opportunity to build career skills needed for independent research, will be evaluated for its ability to provide the diversity candidate with opportunities to become part of the broader scientific community and develop into an independent and productive research scientist.

The research plan will be evaluated for its fit and consistency with:

- The mission priorities of NICHD
- The diversity candidate's stated career goals and future plans
- The diversity candidate's stage of research development

Additional Criteria for Selection

Due to budget constraints, only a very limited number of T32 diversity supplement slots will be awarded in a given fiscal year. NICHD program staff will evaluate the applications using the requested materials and the previously described evaluation process as well as the following criteria:

- Are the program's T32 slots consistently filled with high quality trainees?
- Does the T32 program have an outstanding overall record of training predoctoral and/or postdoctoral trainees for successful research careers?
- Does the T32 program have a history of strong, sustained, and creative efforts to recruit and retain diversity candidates?
- Under this program, a T32 may support only one diversity supplement candidate in a 5-year time frame. T32 programs that received an NICHD T32 diversity supplement are not eligible for another T32 diversity supplement until 5 years have elapsed from the time of the previous diversity supplement award.

After review by NICHD program staff, the T32 PI will be notified of the funding decision. If funding is approved, a supplemental Notice of Award will be issued by Grants Management. The diversity slot will be administered in the same manner as other positions on the training grant.

Reporting Requirements

Progress for diversity trainees supported via this mechanism must be reported in the same way as all other trainees in a Type 5 non-competing continuation application each year that the supplement is needed. The progress and plans of the diversity candidate should be explained in a paragraph or two of text in the body of the progress report. The stipends for these diversity slots should not be included in the budget pages for the Type 5 application because these funds will be awarded as a supplement each year. Instead, a separate budget page for the diversity candidate should be included in the progress report. An individual supported by a diversity supplement slot must be included in the usual reporting tables required for renewal (Type 2) as well as non-competing continuation (Type 5) applications.