

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

## **Background**

The 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 **pre-doctoral 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. Pre-doctoral students 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. The following racial and ethnic groups have been shown to be underrepresented in biomedical research: African Americans, Hispanic Americans, American Indians, Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other Pacific Islanders (as outlined in Section 3, Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principle Investigator) of the Parent F31-Diversity Funding Opportunity Announcement [FOA]): <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-16-308.html>).

Although the T32 program requires a diversity recruitment and retention plan, and the NICHD takes that requirement seriously in evaluating our T32 programs, the Institute also realizes that finding candidates from diverse groups can be a challenge. Providing the flexibility to add a pre-doctoral diversity trainee when the opportunity arises would help the diversity candidates and improve our T32 programs' track records in recruiting and retaining diversity candidates. The NICHD will continue to support regular research supplements to promote diversity, but this option is not available to mentors who do not have qualifying NICHD research funding.

This T32 supplementary program will provide the opportunity for well qualified pre-doctoral fellows who meet the diversity criteria as outlined in as outlined in Section 3, Eligible Individuals (Program Director [PD]/Principle Investigator [PI]) of the Parent F31-Diversity FOA (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-16-308.html>) to receive research training under an NICHD-funded institutional training grant (T32) when all of its awarded pre-doctoral slots have already been filled for the current year. PDs and 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 Pre-Doctoral Diversity Supplement**

- The T32 program must be currently funded by NICHD and have at least 1 year of funding remaining at the time of the request. T32 programs under a no-cost extension

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.

- The T32 program must be study-section approved for more pre-doctoral slots than are actually funded by NICHD. **Only diversity pre-doctoral candidates are eligible for this supplement program.**
- All NICHD funded pre-doctoral slots on the T32 grant must be filled at the time of the supplement request, with documentation submitted and accepted by NICHD via X-train.
- The training experience must take place in the laboratory of a previously approved mentor in the T32 program.

## **Individual Eligibility for a Supplementary Diversity Pre-Doctoral Slot**

- Diversity pre-doctoral candidates must meet all of the administrative requirements for any trainee supported by a NRSA (e.g., citizenship requirements, payback obligation; please see <http://grants.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm> for more information) and must meet the requirements for prior training, experience, and commitment to research expected of any other trainee in the T32 programs proposing to support them.
- Diversity eligibility will be determined according to the definition used in the Parent F31-Diversity FOA (Section 3, Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principle Investigator), <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-16-308.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 pre-doctoral trainee who is already appointed to a regular slot on the parent T32 grant, or to another T32 at the same institution.
- The training experience must take place in the laboratory of a previously approved mentor in the T32 program.

## **Application Procedure**

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 pre-doctoral slots than are actually funded are eligible for a diversity supplement.

Formal applications will be accepted annually on January 15—and must be **submitted electronically under the administrative supplement FOA, PA-16-287** (<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-16-287.html>).

In addition to other required information, the application **must include of a letter of nomination signed by the T32 PD 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 fellows in the “regular” T32 slots.

The following must also be included:

1. 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 pre-doctoral candidate was identified and selected
2. The NIH biosketch and most recent transcript of the diversity pre-doctoral candidate
3. The NIH biosketch of the mentor of the diversity pre-doctoral candidate (if already identified)
4. A statement of the training plan for the candidate (prepared by the PD). 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.
5. A brief statement of the research plan for the candidate prepared jointly by the research mentor and the candidate. In the case of a 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.
6. A brief statement from the candidate describing his/her career goals and future plans
7. A budget page (budget information for the diversity candidate only)
8. A statement of the candidate's eligibility for a diversity supplement as defined in the Parent F31-Diversity FOA (Section 3, Eligible Individuals (Program Director/Principle Investigator) at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-16-308.html>)

These items are meant to document the suitability of the diversity pre-doctoral 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 our funded T32 programs were found to be highly meritorious by peer review, the quality of the overall training program and the mentor(s) will not be re-evaluated during the supplement review process. Therefore, detailed descriptions of the general training program and the biosketches of other mentors should **not** be included in the supplement application.

## Review Criteria

The supplement materials will be subject to administrative review by NICHD extramural staff. Because our funded T32 programs were found to be highly meritorious by peer review, the quality of the overall training program and the mentors will not be re-evaluated during the supplement review process.

The diversity pre-doctoral candidate will be evaluated for:

1. The quality of their academic record and prior research experience; and
2. Their potential to develop as an independent and productive researcher in biomedical, behavioral, or clinical science.

These two aspects should be of roughly the same quality as the other pre-doctoral trainees awarded T32 slots in a particular program. The training plan will be evaluated for its ability to

provide the diversity candidate with opportunities to become part of the broader scientific community, along with the coursework and laboratory experiences to build the research and career skills needed for his/her development into an independent and productive scientist.

The research plan will be evaluated for:

1. Its fit with the mission priorities of NICHD;
2. Its fit with the diversity candidate's stated career goals and future plans; and
3. Its consistency with the diversity candidate's stage of research development.

## **Additional Criteria for Selection**

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

1. Are the T32 slots consistently filled with high quality trainees?
2. Does the T32 program have an outstanding overall record of training pre-doctoral trainees for successful research careers?
3. Does the T32 program have a history of strong, sustained and creative efforts to recruit and retain diversity candidates?
4. Generally, a T32 program may support only one diversity supplement candidate at a time. Programs with a current diversity supplement trainee or programs that have previously received a diversity supplement through this process will have lower priority than programs that have not received a diversity supplement.

After review by NICHD program staff, the T32 Training Director 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 pre-doctoral trainees supported via this mechanism must be reported as for 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 pre-doctoral candidate should be explained in a paragraph or two of text in the body of the progress report. The stipends for these minority 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.

All individuals supported by supplemental slots must be included in the usual reporting tables required for renewal (Type 2) as well as non-competing continuation (Type 5) applications.