

News from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)

NIGMS GLUE GRANTS

In the Spring of 1999, the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS) launched two new grant programs meant to foster team approaches to scientific discovery. These new awards are commonly called "glue grants."

The new programs grew out of meetings of advisors in May and November of 1998 that revealed a need in the scientific communities supported by NIGMS for separate funding mechanisms for collaborative research. There was a strongly felt desire for the Institute to provide resources to facilitate collaborations directed toward research questions that no one laboratory could effectively pursue on its own. For these initiatives (see below), the participating investigators must have independent research support in the area of the glue grant and the glue grant project must fall within the mission of NIGMS. However, it is not required that all participants be supported by NIGMS. Funds may be requested to cover the costs of personnel, supplies, equipment, facilities, travel, and meetings of participating investigators. The funds must be used to support activities necessary for the collaboration (i.e., provide the "glue"), not to support the independent research efforts of the investigators. These initiatives are covered in depth at the NIGMS glue grant Web site: <http://www.nih.gov/nigms/funding/gluegrants.html>. The glue grants can be approached at two different levels of organization: very large-scale collaborations, and the more usual-scale collaborations, each with their own timing and deadlines for applications. They are described in brief below.

The first initiative, described in RFA GM-99-007, "Large-Scale Collaborative Project Awards," was issued May 22, 1999 with a Phase I application deadline of August 27, 1999. These large-scale awards have an upper limit of \$5 million in direct costs per year for up to five years, with the possibility of one competitive renewal period. The awards are to support a team effort to solve a major, complex biological problem within the mission of NIGMS. The first competition was for Phase I planning grants of \$25,000. Only Phase I awardees will be allowed to submit applications for the full awards for the Phase II deadline of January 21, 2000. Ten Phase I applications were received. Nine were accepted for review and three awards were made by NIGMS. The NIGMS Phase I awardees are posted on the NIGMS glue grant Web site. It appears likely that the turn-around time from the date the RFA was published until Phase I applications were due may have been too short for some groups to assemble and apply. Therefore, the Institute plans to reannounce the RFA early in 2000. Anyone interested in applying for a glue grant is strongly encouraged to contact

the appropriate NIGMS program director or contacts listed in the RFA for advice very early in the process. The most common reason for discouraging applications is that they do not fall within the mission of the Institute. Even Phase I applications are a lot of work to invest in a project that will not be accepted by the Institute.

The second initiative, described in PA GM-99-109, "Integrative and Collaborative Approaches to Research," was issued June 3, 1999 and is now an ongoing program with the usual NIH receipt dates for new applications of February 1, June 1, and October 1. These awards are similar in intent to the large-scale collaborative project awards, but are for collaborative projects that are more limited in size and scope than the large-scale awards. The awards have an upper limit of \$300,000 per year in direct costs and they can be made for up to four years. The principal investigator must hold an NIGMS grant with at least two years remaining at the time of the projected award, and there must be at least one other participating investigator. The participating investigators must have external support for their research component but need not be funded by NIGMS. The funds must support activities that are likely to significantly enhance existing capabilities and facilitate new and more integrated approaches to the research aims of the funded projects.

Investigators should also keep in mind that other existing funding mechanisms can be used to support collaborative research, including regular research grants (R01s), program projects, and centers. Potential applicants are strongly urged to talk with their NIGMS program director in the earliest stages of considering an application about which funding mechanism is appropriate for their collaborative efforts. It also is important to keep in mind that applications for glue grants should be built around a research problem, not simply a group of investigators in close proximity or a need for a core resource. But with these caveats in mind, if your response to reading about glue grants is to say, "Aha, that's the mechanism I've been looking for," then give your NIGMS program director or the contacts listed in the initiatives a call to discuss your idea.

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