

# Superfund Hazardous Substance Research and Training Program, P42 Hazardous Substances Basic Research Grants Program

## Frequently Asked Questions (updated July 11, 2014)

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The following are commonly asked questions pertaining to the Superfund Hazardous Substance Research and Training Program (P42) Center Grant (Request for Applications [RFA-ES-14-007](#)). This document includes answers to questions from the recent Funding Opportunities Webinars (archive available at EPA [CLU-IN website](#)).

For questions pertaining to the Request for Applications (RFA) or how to apply electronically, please contact SRP Program Administrators: Dr. Danielle Carlin ([danielle.carlin@nih.gov](mailto:danielle.carlin@nih.gov); 919-541-1409) or Dr. Heather Henry ([henryh@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:henryh@niehs.nih.gov); 919-541-5330). For questions regarding review of applications, please contact Scientific Review Officer Dr. Leroy Worth ([worth@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:worth@niehs.nih.gov); 919-541-0670). For questions related to budget preparations, please contact Grants Management Staff Ms. Lisa Archer Edwards, MBA ([archer@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:archer@niehs.nih.gov); 919-541-0751) or Ms. Michelle Vicalino ([vicalinom@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:vicalinom@niehs.nih.gov); 919-316-4666).

- Q.** Does the “relation to overall center statement” count as part of the 12-page limit in the Research Strategy section for projects and cores?
- A.** Yes, the “relation to overall center” statement needs to be incorporated into the 12-page Research Strategy and should be no more than one page. In the past, this was a separate section, but a new policy at NIH requires applicants to include this within the Research Strategy. Applicants still have a full 1 page of Specific Aims, and it would be appropriate to reiterate/reinforce a project/core’s relation to the overall center and its interactions with other projects and cores in the Specific Aims section.
- Q.** In addition to universities, what other organizations are qualified to apply to the P42 grant mechanism? For example, are state regulatory groups or private entities that have the technical and research personnel eligible to apply?
- A.** Per NIEHS legislative authority, ONLY Higher Education Institutions may apply for award of this P42 FOA. Section 311(a)(3) of SARA limits recipients of awards to "accredited institutions of higher education," which are defined in the Higher Education Act, 20 USC (annotated) 3381. However, grantees are permitted under the law, and encouraged by NIEHS, to subcontract as appropriate with organizations, domestic or foreign, public or private (such as universities, colleges, hospitals, laboratories, faith-based organizations, units of State and local governments, and eligible agencies of the Federal Government) as necessary to conduct portions of the research. Examples of other organizations may include generators of hazardous wastes; persons involved in the detection, assessment, evaluation, and treatment of hazardous substances; owners and operators of facilities at which hazardous substances are located; and State and local governments and community organizations.

While state regulatory groups or private entities could not submit a P42 application, they are encouraged to collaborate with the project and core leaders. Note: there are several restrictions for Federal staff collaborators (e.g. most federal employees are not eligible to receive funds/salary from NIEHS grants) and applicants should contact our Grants Management Staff (Ms. Lisa Archer

Edwards, MBA ([archer@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:archer@niehs.nih.gov); 919-541-0751) or Ms. Michelle Victalino ([victalinom@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:victalinom@niehs.nih.gov); 919-316-4666) for further clarification.

- Q.** How many applications are typically received in response to a P42 Request for Applications (RFA), and how many are typically discussed during the study section review?
- A.** For [RFA-ES-14-007](#), the NIEHS intends to fund an estimate of up to four awards. The number of awards is dependent upon annual appropriations. On average, the SRP receives 12-15 applications per review cycle, and typically half of the applications are discussed.
- Q.** If an application was not discussed during a study section review and did not receive comments on the overall Center in a summary statement, how should an applicant consider revising the overall Center?
- A.** Once a summary statement has been released, the applicant is highly encouraged to contact their assigned SRP Program Administrator (listed on the Summary Statement) to discuss the reviewers' comments. The SRP Program Administrator can assist the applicant in determining which comments apply to the overall review of the Center.
- Q.** How many new Centers are funded during a typical granting cycle? And do the grants funded per cycle include new and renewal applications?
- A.** The decision to support a Center is not based on whether a Center is new or on a renewal status. Rather there are three criteria used in making funding decisions for a P42 grant application: technical and scientific merit of the grant application, programmatic needs, and availability of funds.
- Q.** The SRP mandates are written around "hazardous substances". Are these strictly environmental chemicals, or are biological agents also considered "hazardous substances" (e.g., antibiotic resistance genes, viruses)? Also, are petroleum products considered "hazardous substances" (e.g., products associated with hydraulic fracturing (i.e., "fracking") or an oil spill)?
- A.** The SRP does not consider a biological agent a "hazardous substance" and does not fund Centers related to petroleum products/industry. Please see the SARA legislation for definition of Hazardous Substances (Section 101, p. 493.):  
[http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/r\\_s/srp\\_program\\_mandates.pdf](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/r_s/srp_program_mandates.pdf).
- Q.** How much detail is allowed for Appendix materials? Is there a page limit?
- A.** Applicants should consult NIH policy regarding acceptable appendix material, found in the notices [NOT-OD-10-077](#) and [NOT-OD-11-080](#). Appendices should not be used to attempt to bypass page caps for any section of the application (i.e., project, core, or overall). Nothing should be placed into the appendix that is required in the application as it may affect the evaluation and scoring of the application. The application should stand on its own, and the appendix should be supportive of the application. Reviewers will receive the application, appendix materials, and other review-related information, but reviewers do not always look at appendix material. There is no page limit for Appendix materials, and all appendices should be clearly labeled with the component to which it is related.
- Q.** Can the application be submitted via Grants.gov?

- A.** P42 applications should be submitted using the Assist system (<https://public.era.nih.gov/assist>), or the applicant can refer to the current RFA and click on “Apply For Grant Electronically”.
- Q.** Can the Letter of Intent (LOI) or application cover letter include suggested reviewers for specific projects and cores?
- A.** Please do not submit suggested reviewers in your LOI or cover letter. The LOI should contain information pertinent to the application, titles of research projects and cores, the names of key personnel in the application, and the names of institutions.
- Q.** Is the Community Engagement statement part of the 12 page limit for the Community Engagement Core (CEC)?
- A.** The Community Engagement Statement should be included in the 12 page research strategy section. This should be placed after the abstract for the CEC. Additionally, for applicants proposing a Community Engagement Research Project, the Research Strategy should also contain a "Community Engagement Statement".
- Q.** Are the Specific Aims included in the 12 page limit Research Strategy for each Project and Core?
- A.** The Specific Aims is limited to one page but is not to be included in the Research Strategy section, which is limited to 12 pages. Each Project and Core will upload its own specific aims as well as a separate attachment for the research strategy in the assigned areas in ASSIST.
- Q.** What type of supplemental information can be submitted after the application deadline?
- A.** You are allowed a maximum of 3 pages to include updated publications, updated grant support, and any changes in major key personnel. The three pages are for the total application and may cover information between the submission date and before the review.
- Q.** Will the Research Translation Core (RTC) and CEC be separately reviewed? Is there the possibility that if the RTC and CEC are reviewed separately there might be some aspects missed from each of those Cores?
- A.** The RTC and CEC will be reviewed separately. It is also important that the applicant describe each of their cores and projects sufficiently so that they are stand-alone sections in the application. Reviewers may, at times, only be assigned to specific sections of a P42 Center application. The applicant should not assume that their project/core reviewer has seen the entire application, and therefore should write their application with this perspective in mind. However, we strongly recommend each project and core provide sufficient cross-referencing between projects and cores.
- Q.** For which section does the budget justification belong? Is the leadership and implementation plan a part of the budget justification for a core?
- A.** The budget justification comes directly after the budget section of the respective Project or Core. The leadership and implementation plans should not be placed in the budget section. These plans should be included within the Research Strategy section.
- Q.** Does travel to the SRP annual meeting need to be included for admin, Core and Project leaders, and four trainees? Is this included in the Administrative Core budget?

- A.** Travel to the SRP Annual Meeting should be included in the Administrative Core budget according to the RFA which states: “Funds for travel by appropriate staff (i.e., Center Director, Center Administrator, Training Core leader, Research Translation Core leader, Community Engagement Core leader, and four trainees) to attend the Superfund Research Program three-day annual meeting shall be included in the Administrative Core’s budget for each year.” In addition to the Center Director and Administrator, it is highly encouraged that each Center sends the research translation core, community engagement core, and training core leaders to the Annual Meeting due to important coordinating meetings held for these individuals. Hence, it is recommended that, at a minimum, these individuals’ travel (plus that of 4 trainees) is included in the Administrative budget. Each project and core may choose to include in their budget travel support to the Annual Meeting for additional staff not covered under the Administrative Core budget.
- Q.** Can funding for equipment instrumentation maintenance contracts be included in the budget?
- A.** Yes, these expenses may be included in the budget.
- Q.** Are letters of support included in one section, or separately included for each project and core?
- A.** Please include letters of support separately for each project and core, and they should be placed in the other attachments section in ASSIST. Hence, if one letter of support applies to more than one project or core, the applicant should include that letter in each of the project/core sections.
- Q.** If a PMCID has not been assigned, how should applicants cite those publications?
- A.** Applicants should follow the NIH guidelines for citing publications. The NIH Public Access Policy ([http://publicaccess.nih.gov/submit\\_process.htm](http://publicaccess.nih.gov/submit_process.htm)) ensures that the public has access to peer-reviewed publications arising from NIH funded research. If a publication has not been published, please state that it is in press.
- Q.** How do you evaluate a research project or Center that focuses on a specific Superfund site, routes of exposure, and/or the health outcomes?
- A.** It is best to contact SRP Program staff with more specific information as to what is being proposed. SRP Staff is readily available to discuss your application proposal: Dr. Danielle Carlin ([danielle.carlin@nih.gov](mailto:danielle.carlin@nih.gov); 919-541-1409) or Dr. Heather Henry ([henryh@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:henryh@niehs.nih.gov); 919-541-5330).
- Q.** Do we need to use a PHS398 continuation page for when developing an application?
- A.** It is best to follow SF424 guidelines and the ASSIST guidelines ([http://era.nih.gov/era\\_training/assist.cfm](http://era.nih.gov/era_training/assist.cfm)) which will provide the exact forms that need to be used.
- Q.** Should a Competitive Renewal Application list the Cores with a total of \$475,000 for the four Cores combined, or should the Cores not exceed \$400,000 or 20% of the total Direct Costs?
- A.** [RFA-ES-14-007](#) provides information about direct cost caps for the cores in a competitive renewal application. The Administrative, Research Translation, and Training Cores cannot exceed \$125,000 (Direct Costs) each and the CEC cannot exceed \$100,000 (Direct Costs). Although, when these amounts are combined, the total for all Cores equals \$475,000 (Direct Costs), the overall cap for all the Cores should not exceed \$400,000 or no more than 20% of the total Direct Costs. This provides applicants flexibility to allocate the \$400,000 within the caps established within the RFA.

For example, a renewal applicant might have:

Administrative Core: \$100K

Research Translation Core: \$100K

Community Engagement Core: \$100K

Training Core: \$100K

Or:

Administrative Core: \$125K

Research Translation Core: \$75K

Community Engagement Core: \$90K

Training Core: \$110K

Etc...

For NEW applicants, the cap for the sum of the four cores is \$320,000 (Direct Costs). Each core cannot exceed \$125K for Administrative Core, \$125K for Research Translation Core, \$100K for Community Engagement Core, and \$100K for Training Core.

- Q.** For renewal applications, what should an applicant do if they would like to discontinue one project and add another project? Will this create issues when the application goes through the peer review process or when it is uploaded to the ASSIST software? For example, when an applicant refers to a project, will the reviewer or ASSIST know which project the applicant is referring to?
- A.** With regard to uploading into ASSIST, projects are ordered in ASSIST based on the order in which they are uploaded, so the numbering of projects will have no bearing on the upload.

With regard to discontinuing projects and replacement with new projects, it is a recommendation (see language below) to number projects in the order they should be reviewed. Please keep in mind the following:

- NIEHS Review Staff will indicate to an applicant that numbering of previous/new projects will require a moment of re-orientation for reviewers when comparing previous and renewal applications.
- Projects are generally reviewed in order, so the applicant should list his/her projects in a logical order progression.
- If one decides to change the order/skip numbers, the applicant may be able to minimize confusion to the reviewer by referring to projects/cores through a descriptive name, such as "Oxidative Stress" as opposed to a "Project Number 5".
- As mentioned in [RFA-ES-14-007](#): "Table of Changes to Projects and Cores. To assist review of renewal/resubmission applications, include a table listing projects and core components (by project title and project/core leader) that denotes which projects are new, continuing, substantially modified, finished/completed, or discontinued. This table should coincide in order and number with the projects and cores in the current application. Also indicate which projects are considered to be biomedical research and which are considered environmental science and engineering research. It is recommended that projects/cores are numbered consecutively (i.e., numbering should not be skipped if a project from a previous funding period is discontinued in the renewal application). Please label in the following format: new = N; continuing = C; substantially modified = M; finished/completed = F; or discontinued = D. This table should be loaded as a file titled "Table of Changes to Projects and Cores."

- Q.** For resubmission applications, how do I indicate where changes/modifications have been made? Can I use a different font color for text that has been modified?
- A.** The SF424 Guidelines state: “The substantial scientific changes must be marked in the text of the application by bracketing, indenting, or change of typography. Do not underline or shade the changes. Deleted sections should be described but not marked as deletions. If the changes are so extensive that essentially all of the text would be marked, explain this in the Introduction. The Preliminary Studies/Progress Report section should incorporate work completed since the prior version of the application was submitted.” While the guidelines do not specifically mention font color changes (probably because up until very recently, paper copies were scanned in black and white, which would negate the use of color changes) there would be potential problems for accessibility and readability. If you change the color, then make sure it is still readable. Please note, however, that brackets, or lines in the margins are more common and expected.
- Q.** Are Multiple-PIs allowed for P42s (e.g. Multiple Center Directors)?
- A.** While it is NIH Policy to make the Multi-PI option available, SRP Program Staff strongly encourage applicants to apply with a single Center Director since leadership role is so critical for the integration and complexity of the P42 Centers. Many Centers choose to have a Center Director plus a Deputy Director, and this has been a very successful model for the P42s.
- Q.** Does it strengthen an application to have a Deputy Director (or Co-director)?
- A.** In general, having a Deputy Director can be beneficial, both in terms of how an application is viewed, and how that grant is managed once it is awarded. Often when Centers elect to have a Deputy Director, they tend to complement one another’s expertise. For example, if the Director has strength in engineering sciences, s/he might select a Deputy Director with biomedical expertise. If the Director has not had experience running large centers before (e.g. the leader for multiple grants) then s/he would want to strongly consider having a Deputy Director with that type of experience.
- Q.** How should applicants designate the project role for projects or cores? Is there a preference for using “Co-Project Leader” or “Co-Core Leader”, “Co-PI”, “Co-Investigator”?
- A.** There is flexibility in ASSIST for the terminology used for project and core staff. We recommend that applicants are consistent throughout their proposal and that for any given project role, the description of that role is clear in the budget justification as well as the biosketch.
- Q.** How does one categorize the costs for next generation sequencing (NextGenSeq)? Is this budgeted as supplies or equipment as previously was the case with microarrays?
- A.** The Grants Policy Statement offers the following guidance: “Genomic Arrays (GA) are a high-throughput genetic analysis technology which enables the study of genetic variation and gene expression at high resolution. Approaches such as genome-wide association and gene expression profiling often depend upon manufactured products known as microarrays or bead arrays. These tools are exceptional among laboratory supplies in that they are almost always procured from a commercial source; have a relatively high unit cost and are often utilized in large numbers. The treatment of the costs for purchase of GA as "supplies" in these specialized award budgets at high

levels of usage would result in the application of F&A cost recovery that is disproportionate to the actual administrative burden associated with the relatively high cost of the procurement of these GA. Accordingly, for purposes of budgeting for and award of high volume purchases of GA in excess of \$50,000 per year, the standard treatment of these resources as supplies in determining the F&A base of an award will be non-applicable. Instead the requested and reimbursed costs for GA will utilize as a surrogate the concept of subcontracts (consortium/contractual cost). Therefore for each budget year, the first \$50,000 of GA will be treated as "supplies", and any GA in excess of \$50,000 (for high volume requirements) will use as a surrogate the budgeting and reimbursement concept utilized for subcontracts (consortium/contractual cost), providing consistent budgeting, accounting and reimbursement of these costs.” Source:

[http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps\\_2013/nihgps\\_ch7.htm#genomic\\_arrays](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2013/nihgps_ch7.htm#genomic_arrays)

- Q.** Can a cumulative publication list be included in the Appendix materials?
- A.** An applicant should refer to the SR424 guidelines (see PHS SF424 Part I: Instructions for Preparing and Submitting an Application) for materials that should and should not be included in the Appendix materials. For competitive renewal applications, the cumulative publication list should be included in the Progress Report Publications List.
- Q.** The Superfund RFA-ES-14-007 states that the Research Projects should contain a “Relevance to Superfund” statement. Where should an applicant place it in their application?
- A.** The "Relevance to Superfund" statement should be placed in the Research Strategy section.
- Q.** Are the progress reports only for renewal applications, but not resubmissions?
- A.** The Progress Reports for the Projects and Cores are for renewal applications only. However, if you have a resubmission of a competitive renewal (i.e., your grant was previously funded by SRP), you will also want to include a Progress report.
- Q.** How are the Administrative, Community Engagement, Research Translation, and Training Cores scored during the review?
- A.** Each Core will receive a single score, but, unlike the Projects, the Cores will not receive separate criterion scores (e.g., Significance, Investigator, Innovation, Approach, Environment, etc.)
- Q.** The Training Core’s Recruitment and Retention Plan for Diversity, which is uploaded separately from the Program Plan, counts toward a 25 page limit. How does ASSIST recognize that the 25 Page limit has been met?
- A.** After a Word Document has been converted to a pdf and uploaded into ASSIST, the ASSIST program will recognize the number of pages in each attachment, and will automatically count the total number of pages to account for the 25 pages. (Please note that the 25 page limit includes the Background, Program Plan, and Recruitment and Retention Plan to Enhance Diversity).

- Q.** Within a Project or Core, can an applicant pay their trainees (i.e., graduate student/Post-Doctoral Researcher) only partial support of their salary/stipend or must they pay their entire stipend/salary amount from the grant?
- A.** An applicant has the option of paying partial support for a trainee's salary/stipend, but must make note in their application that the trainee will still receive compensation from the institution that meets NIH guidelines for salaries/stipends.
- Q.** On the Training Core budget, is there a limit for tuition costs that an applicant can request, as stated by the NRSA component?
- A.** An applicant can request actual costs for tuition and does not need to follow NRSA guidelines for tuition.
- Q.** Who should a new applicant contact if they are interested in submitting an application?
- A.** New applicants are encouraged to contact any SRP staff listed on the RFA or on the SRP website (<https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/dert/programs/srp/>). After initial contact with an applicant, SRP staff members will decide who will be the applicant's regular point of contact throughout the development of their application.
- Q.** When should an applicant contact an SRP staff member?
- A.** Most successful applicants prepare their scientific ideas early on in the application process (e.g., 1 – 2 years before submitting an application). It is important for applicants to contact SRP staff early during their application development, so that SRP staff can provide better guidance about NIH policy and RFA requirements.
- Q.** Do specific aims and resource sharing plan need to be included in the Training Core?
- A.** No, these sections are not to be included in the Training Core. Please follow RFA-ES-14-007 and the SF424 guidelines for the sections that are required for the Training Core.
- Q.** For the Training Core, what is the page limit for the Progress Report (for renewal applications only), and does this progress report include the publication list?
- A.** There is no page limit for the Progress Report and no publications from the trainees are required for this section. The Progress Report should contain a Trainee List (for an example, see [https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/r\\_s/srp\\_p42\\_examples\\_of\\_tables.pdf](https://www.niehs.nih.gov/research/supported/assets/docs/r_s/srp_p42_examples_of_tables.pdf)) and any other pertinent information about the progress of the Training Core from the last funding cycle.

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