

COUNCIL DELEGATED AUTHORITIES AND GUIDELINES FOR STAFF ACTIONS

Introduction:

NIH Policy requires an annual review by Advisory Councils of the delegated authorities and operational guidelines under which institute staff operate. These guidelines fall into two general categories. First, Council-delegated staff actions are actions delegated to staff that require no follow up action with Council. Second, Council delegates to staff certain operational actions that are required to ensure the smooth operations of the extramural division in conducting business with our grantees; these actions require the establishment of a threshold level for Council involvement and are listed as section II.

Council-Delegated Staff Actions:

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) extramural staff may take the following actions without Council review.

1. Authorize relocation of a currently funded project to a new institution when the principal investigator transfers from one institution to another and the original grantee institution relinquishes the grant. Such projects may be supported at the new institution for a period of up to the remainder of the current project period and in an amount generally not to exceed that previously recommended for the remaining period.

This authorization also applies when the principal investigator moves to a new institution following concurrence with the Initial Review Group (IRG) action by Council, but prior to the time that an award is made.

2. Approve a new principal investigator or program director for a research grant or an institutional training grant, sub-project director or other key personnel on program projects or center grants, for a period equal to the time remaining on the current project.

3. Extend a project grant period with additional funds to assure orderly termination of the project or to protect the investment already made.

Staff, in discussion with the principal investigator, will determine the period of support and budget necessary to permit orderly termination of the research project. Special attention will be given to salary for essential staff, for purchase of supplies and for support of experimental animals. The (prorated) supplemental award should not exceed 12 months.

In the case of training grants, stipends may be provided until completion of the training for those trainees already appointed to the program.

In cases where a competing renewal application is deferred by either the Initial Review Group (IRG) or the Council, or when bridging funds are needed until an amended application has been submitted funds may be provided to permit support of the previously recommended research until review is completed and a final decision on the competing

renewal application has been made. If a competing award is made, interim funds and the period of support may be deducted from the budget and budget period of the first year of the continuation award.

4. Authorize supplemental funds in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 direct costs (excluding consortium F&A costs) to any Center, program project, or other multi-disciplinary program grant or cooperative agreement for the purpose of supporting a conference, symposium or scientific workshop. This provision will apply in those instances in which the principal investigator or center director can show that the meeting is necessary for the scientific community or Institute.

5. Authorize supplemental direct cost funds to a Center in an amount not to exceed 15% of the direct costs (excluding consortium F&A costs) recommended for a current annual budget period and/or \$500,000 direct costs (excluding consortium F&A costs) for supplements awarded under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. This provision will apply only in those circumstances where: 1) the Center Director can show adequate justification that such funds are required to cover unanticipated costs, or are needed to respond to newly identified problems of urgent program priority, or 2) the supplement is in response to special programmatic or budgetary needs or opportunities identified by the Director, NIEHS.

6. Authorize the award of funds based on the receipt and approval of a supplemental application submitted in response to NIH Program Announcements on Research Supplements to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research and Research Supplements to Promote Re-Entry into Biomedical and Behavioral Research Careers.

7. Authorize the award of supplemental funds when required to comply with emergency response needs as designated by specific appropriation language or as designated by the Director, NIEHS.

8. Approve continuation of grant under an interim principal investigator during the temporary absence of the principal investigator.

9. Approve extension, beyond the first extension, of grants without additional funds.

10. Take final action to increase stipends of grant-supported trainees in accord with NIH policy.

11. Take final action to provide supplemental funds not to exceed \$150,000 direct costs (excluding consortium F&A costs) to grants for increases in the budget for unforeseen needs that are within the scope of the approved/funded project or protocol.

Reviewed and Approved by NAEHS Council on February 19, 2010

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NAEHS COUNCIL REVIEW OF GRANTS

I. Basis for Special Review of Individual Grant Applications:

Applications are presented to the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council (NAEHS) for special consideration when:

1. The research proposed has been identified by either Council or staff as being of particular interest or concern;
2. Some aspect of the recommendation from the IRG has been questioned by either Council or staff, e.g., an apparent discrepancy between the comments in the summary statement and the percentile ranking/priority score;
3. Ethical, hazard, or safety issues or concerns are identified by staff;
4. Concerns about participation of human subjects are raised by the IRG or are identified by staff or Council, regardless of the percentile ranking/priority score;
5. Concerns are raised regarding the principal investigator's inclusion of ~~minorities and women~~ **and underrepresented minorities** in study populations, regardless of the percentile ranking/priority score; **(Change recommended to reflect standard terminology.)**
6. Concerns regarding the treatment of animals are raised;
7. The application is a reviewed foreign application with a fundable percentile ranking;
8. The application is a reviewed center grant application or supplement.
9. All reviewed program project and regular research grant applications with a ranking better than the 40th percentile or a priority score better than 250 and a budget in excess of \$500,000 direct costs (excluding consortium F&A costs) in any one year will be identified by staff and may be raised for individual discussion by Council.

Applications not identified for individual discussion are reviewed en bloc.

II. Options for Council Action for Special Review:

The following options generally are available to the Council for each application that is identified for individual discussion.

1. Concurrence with the IRG scientific merit review;
2. Change in priority status to HPP (High Program Priority) or to LPP (Low Program Priority). An HPP designation elevates the relative funding position of an application but does not necessarily assure funding. An LPP designation lowers the relative funding position of an application, but does not necessarily prohibit funding. Staff will give

special consideration to all HPP and LPP recommendations in making a final funding decision;

3. Deferral to NIEHS staff for additional information for Council consideration at a subsequent meeting;
4. Deferral for reconsideration of the scientific and technical merit of an application by the same or another IRG;
5. Non-concurrence with IRG recommendation for policy, procedure, or administrative reasons; or

In specific cases, additional options may be available. These will be detailed by the staff for the Council's consideration as the need arises.

III. Early Council Concurrence Using the Electronic Council Book:

The purpose of early Council concurrence is to expedite the funding of meritorious grant applications. It is anticipated that the time from submission of an application to eventual funding can be shortened by approximately one month. **The following information details the procedure for early Council concurrence:**

One or more subgroups of Council will be designated as participants in the early concurrence process. Each subgroup will be composed of three Council members with a broad range of expertise and experience. Members of the subcommittees will be solicited and confirmed at the **September/October Council meeting for the next calendar year.**

At least one month before the Council meeting, staff will identify applications for which there are no issues that would require special review requirements as indicated under item 1 above. These applications will be submitted to **the** subgroup electronically through the Electronic Council Book.

Council **subgroup** members will be notified electronically of the existence of the panel of applications and a "due date" for their action will be identified. **Subgroup** members may concur en bloc or may remove any or all applications from concurrence. Any application removed from the early concurrence process by **subgroup** members will be held for consideration at the Council meeting. Two of the three Council members on the subgroup are required for further staff action.

Upon early concurrence, as indicated above, staff may initiate the award process for meritorious applications within the pay line. All other applications will be considered at the Council meeting according to the procedures indicated above.

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