LIMITED FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

TO: BUMC Faculty
FROM: Andrew W. Taylor, PhD, Associate Dean For Research, BUSM
DATE: June 16, 2021
SUBJECT: NIH - Director’s Early Independence Award

OBJECTIVES: The NIH Director’s Early Independence Award supports exceptional junior investigators who wish to pursue independent research soon after completion of their terminal doctoral degree or post-graduate clinical training, thereby forgoing the traditional post-doctoral training period and accelerating their entry into an independent research career. For the program to support the best possible researchers and research, applications are sought which reflect the full diversity of the research workforce. Individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups and from the full spectrum of eligible institutions in all geographic locations, are strongly encouraged to apply to this Funding Opportunity Announcement. In addition, applications in all topics relevant to the broad mission of NIH are welcome, including, but not limited to, topics in the behavioral, social, biomedical, applied, and formal sciences and topics that may involve basic, translational, or clinical research. The NIH Director's Early Independence Award is a component of the High-Risk, High-Reward Research program of the NIH Common Fund.

Part of the High-Risk, High-Reward Research program, the award supports outstanding junior scientists with the intellect, scientific creativity, drive, and maturity to bypass the traditional postdoctoral training period to launch independent research careers.

FUNDING INFORMATION: $250,000 direct costs per year for up to 5 years.

ELIGIBILITY RESTRICTIONS: Any individual(s) with the skills, knowledge, and resources necessary to carry out the proposed research as the Program Director(s)/Principal Investigator(s) (PD(s)/PI(s)) is invited to work with his/her organization to develop an application for support. Individuals from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups as well as individuals with disabilities are always encouraged to apply for NIH support.

Applications with multiple PDs/PIs will not be accepted. Only single PD/PI applications are allowed. Only the PD/PI may be listed as a Senior/Key Person and provide a Biographical Sketch.

There is no U.S. citizenship requirement for PDs/PIs. For applications submitted on behalf of non-U.S. citizens with temporary U.S. visas, visa status must allow the PD/PI to conduct the proposed research at the applicant institution. The applicant institution is responsible for determining if and documenting that the PD’s/PI’s visa will allow the PD/PI to remain in the U.S. for the duration of the award.
**Time window for eligibility:** Must complete doctoral degree or clinical training between June 1, 2020 and September 30, 2022. The degree receipt date is that which appears on the official transcript for the degree. The end of post-graduate clinical training includes residency and fellowship periods. At the time of application, the PD/PI must not have served as a post-doctoral fellow following a previous (not the most recent) doctoral degree for more than twelve months. At the time of award, either 1) the Early Independence investigator must have received a PhD, MD, DO, DC, DDS, DVM, OD, DPM, ScD, EngD, DrPH, DNSc, ND (Doctor of Naturopathy), PharmD, DSW, PsyD, or equivalent doctoral degree from an accredited domestic or foreign institution (it is the responsibility of the sponsoring institution to determine if a foreign doctoral degree is equivalent), or 2) an authorized official of the degree-granting or training institution must certify that all degree requirements have been met and that the receipt date of the degree (as will appear on the transcript) will be before September 30, 2022; in addition, an authorized official of the host institution must certify that the PD/PI will be eligible to conduct independent research at the institution at the time of the project start date.

**Level of effort:** Requires 9.6 months of research effort each year for first 2 years.

**Research independence at time of application:** Individuals are eligible only if they, at the time of application submission, do not have research independence. Lack of research independence is defined functionally rather than by position title. Eligible individuals must have all the following characteristics:

- The PD/PI's current research agenda is set through concurrence with mentors.
- The PD/PI's research is funded primarily through support to other investigators (mentored fellowships such as NIH F31 or F32 Fellowships or NSF Graduate Research Fellowships do not preclude eligibility).
- The PD/PI does not have any space assigned directly by the institution for the conduct of his/her research.
- The PD/PI, according to institutional policy, cannot apply for an NIH R01 grant without special waiver or exemption from the institution.

Though the PD/PI must not be functionally independent at the time of application submission, they may become functionally independent prior to time of award and still retain eligibility for the award.

Prospective PDs/PIs should contact appropriate institutional leaders to seek an appointment in an independent research position. Alternatively, institutions may actively recruit eligible junior scientists to apply for support through this program. In either case, the institution is expected to provide substantial support for the junior scientist, as detailed below. To foster independence, PDs/PIs may benefit from being hosted by an institution they have not previously studied or trained at.

**The PIs must show that they have institutional resource commitment:**

- Laboratory space
- Other administrative and support
- Institutional financial commitment.
INTERNAL SELECTION PROCESS: Interested BU Medical campus faculty should email the following materials listed below combined into a single PDF file to Diana Lehman (dlehman@bu.edu) by Wednesday, July 14, 2021. If you are a BMC investigator and wish to apply for this opportunity, please contact Jennifer Fleming, Director of Foundation Relations and Government Grants at jennifer.fleming@bmc.org by Wednesday, June 23, 2021.

- A brief (one-page) statement by the candidate describing their scientific achievements and proposed research project;
- A letter of recommendation from the appropriate department chair or dean;
- A brief budget outline for the proposed research;
- Up-to-date NIH biosketch.

A faculty committee will review internal proposals and select nominees.


*In requesting to be considered for this limited submission funding opportunity, you are making a commitment, if selected, to submit your proposal to the sponsor in a timely manner and to Sponsored Programs in accordance with the Proposal Submission Policy.*