

NIMHD MISSION

Question: Is research with international populations allowable? Does a global health disparity count under NIMHD's mission? Can I do research in an international population?

- **Answer:** Yes. However, research must be directed toward building a career as a health disparities researcher for the L60 and the issues must be explicitly applicable to US health disparity populations.

Question: I am also working on a project with people living with physical and cognitive disabilities. While participants in these projects are racially diverse, the “disparity focus” is disabilities; however, it looks to me as if the LRP does **not** include people living with disabilities in its scope of health disparity populations. Is this true?

- **Answer:** Yes, you are correct. People with disabilities are not included as an NIH-designated Health Disparity Population.

Question: Does "minority health disparity" only refer to racial and ethnic minority or do other minority populations such as sexual and gender minorities also fit?

- **Answer:** The following populations have been designated as **minority populations:** Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders. The following populations have been designated as **health disparity populations:** Blacks/African Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, American Indians/Alaska Natives, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and other Pacific Islanders, sexual/gender minority populations, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations, rural populations and sexual gender minorities (SGM).

Question: Can you clarify whether a project that is a secondary data analysis that is supported by salary and start-up funds (i.e., faculty position) would be considered an eligible project for this award despite not being a project funded by an NIH grant?

- **Answer:** Secondary data analysis is acceptable. Research does not have to be supported by an NIH grant and can be supported through faculty start-up funds and salary; however, research questions must focus on minority health or health disparities.

Question: I am conducting health disparities research on a population that is mostly Hispanic/Latino (~70%) but also includes other racial/ethnic groups (mostly non-Hispanic white). Is it considered acceptable to research health disparities in a mixed group such as this?

- **Answer:** Health disparities is implicitly comparative; therefore, having a mixed racial/ethnic sample population is an advantage.

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Question: I am 40% funded on a funded project that is not focused on minority health, is it better to not include that project or try to tease out the minorities who might be collected as part of the program? The other 60% of my funding is directly on minority health.

- **Answer:** The applicant must work on minority health or health disparity research for at least 20 hours or 50% time per week during the award period. It is advisable to only address the work that directly meets the intent of the funding notice.

RESEARCH PROJECTS/REQUIREMENT

Question: Do most people who apply for the LRP work on a single research project for at least 50% of their time during the contract period?

- **Answer:** Many applicants work on more than 1 project. However, if you describe more than 1 project, there is a chance that reviewers may see your research as scattered and unfocused or unlikely to be productive. You may want to address how you will balance the projects.

Question: Regarding the definition of research funding, would a postdoc on a NIH funded T32 that is supplemented by their academic institution be considered eligible?

- **Answer:** You are required to devote 50% time to research. Research support from a T32 with or without institution supplementation is acceptable.

Question: Does the applicant need to demonstrate two years for protected research funding from the time of application or the time of contract initiation? Or is it 2 years of a research plan?

- **Answer:** You must demonstrate a funded position for 2 years from the date of contract award. You can change institutions and take the LRP contract with by requesting a Change of Institution. Please contact a Program Officer before initiating a Change of Institution.

Question: Am I required to submit only a research project that I am leading as a PI, or may I submit my work that I am conducting on another PI's project?

- **Answer:** Either case is permissible; however, you should submit clear and detailed descriptions of the research, and your role, on which you plan to work during the LRP period.

Question: I understand that we must be funded for our research. What if we are in the process for applying for funding to cover the proposed project that relates to the LRP? Are we then ineligible?

- **Answer:** The academic institution must verify that the applicant is covered by research funding from the date of award through the two years of the initial award.

Question: "Clinical Research" must be conducted in "inpatient and outpatient settings" but traditional epi methods and other approaches are not conducted in patient settings. Could you clarify?

- **Answer:** For the L32 Clinical Research for Persons from Disadvantaged Backgrounds:
 - NIH defines Clinical Research as patient-oriented research conducted with human subjects, or research on the causes and consequences of disease in human populations

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involving material of human origin (such as tissue specimens and cognitive phenomena) for which an investigator or colleague directly interacts with human subjects in an outpatient or inpatient setting to clarify a problem in human physiology, pathophysiology or disease, or epidemiological or behavioral studies, outcomes or health services research, or developing new technologies, therapeutic interventions, or clinical trials.

- Epidemiological research is permitted if the investigator or a colleague directly interacts with human subjects.

Question: I'm in the process of ending a project and will be working on a grant and additional projects. In my application, is it ok to discuss in my research plan projects that are not currently in the works?

- **Answer:** Yes, it is appropriate to discuss projects on which you will be working during the funding period of the LRP. However, if you discuss a project for which funding is pending, reviewers may discount this project because funding is not secured and the feasibility of the project may be in question.

Question: If I am working 50% on a Health Disparities project and 50% on another project is there any need to mention the non-health disparities project in my application?

- **Answer:** No. There is no need to mention the other project as long as you are devoting a minimum of 20 hours per week to health disparity research.

Question: What if grant funding for the research is discontinued during LRP period what happens to the LRP?

- **Answer:** If grant funding for the research is discontinued, please immediately contact the Program Official. If no other support can be secured, the applicant can apply to the Division of Loan Repayment for a Withdrawal Without Penalty.

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REVIEW

Question: What is the basis for the extensive time of review for applications (November submission and August notification), when other grants are reviewed on a very different time scale?

- **Answer:** The Loan Repayment Program is a contract, not a grant. Depending on the program, the Loan Repayment Program receives from hundreds to more than a thousand applications. Reviews are conducted in writing over a period of months not in a one or two-day session. The time allocated for the program includes many processes conducted by both Program and Review.

Question: How does one obtain an eRA Commons ID? Is the eRA Commons ID the same as the eRA Person ID we see on the Personal Profile Summary of eRA Commons?

- **Answer:** For instructions on how to obtain an eRA Commons account, please see: https://era.nih.gov/registration_accounts.cfm.
- The eRA Commons ID and eRA Person ID are the same.

FEEDBACK

Question: I emailed previously to request information from the reviewers from my application last year. Could you please provide that information. How can an applicant receive feedback once an application is reviewed?

- **Answer:** Applicants will receive written feedback through the Program Officer on reviewers' comments on their applications, tips on how to improve on review criteria will be attached as well as archived with the 2019 NIMHD LRP Technical Assistance Webinar on the NIMHD LRP website at: <https://nimhd.nih.gov/programs/extramural/loan-repayment.html>.

Question: I am wondering if I should apply again. Does this loan repayment plan support those who already have a research career? It takes a lot to apply for this grant and I do not want to apply if I do not qualify. I do have a research career but I do not complete research on health and I would like to move in that arena, specifically observing mental health as a health disparity in the African American community. Is this feasible?

- **Answer:** The LRP supports the recruitment and retention of researchers to conduct research on minority health or health disparities. It supports researchers at any phase of their career; however, most applicants are early in their career. Since you "do not complete research on health" and would like to move into that area, qualifying for support would be feasible but very difficult as every aspect of your application, including detailed and concrete information in your referees' letters, must provide evidence that you are on a trajectory to becoming an NIH supported health disparities researcher.

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APPLICATION PROCESS

Question: First, I am not able to start an application - it might be because I started an account a few years ago and the system recognizes me and thus won't let me login in.

- **Answer:** For technical assistance with the application process, please contact either the eRA Commons Help Desk at [301-402-7469](tel:301-402-7469), as your issue seems to fit into that category, or the Division of Loan Repayment Help Desk at [866-849-4047](tel:866-849-4047).

Question: I am at a new institution California State University, Los Angeles and my research has shifted somewhat - I want to ask some questions to help me make sure I align my statement and application in the best direction.

- **Answer:** For information concerning alignment with the NIMHD mission please refer to the 2019 NIMHD LRP Technical Assistance Webinar on the NIMHD LRP website at: <https://nimhd.nih.gov/programs/extramural/loan-repayment.html>. At that site you will also find tips for making your application more competitive. You should also look at the NIMHD mission and science visioning resources available at: <https://www.nimhd.nih.gov/about/overview/science-visioning/>.

Question: Where on the website can I locate information regarding expectations for each of the sections (Research Project/Activities, Career Development Plan, Research Environment, and Personal Statement) such as page limits, etc?

- **Answer:** APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS
https://www.lrp.nih.gov/sites/default/files/docs/pdfs/OAS_Instruction_Guide_FY18_508c.pdf

Question: Based on the definitions on your website who is considered my Research Supervisor? Would this person be the PI for the T32 that I am under for my post-doc or my assigned research mentor? So then, would my research mentor be considered my primary mentor?

- **Answer:** The Research Supervisor is the person who verifies that you are doing the work you committed to do in your LRP application. That person could be the PI for the T32 or your research mentor and may or may not be considered your primary mentor.

Question: Who is an institutional business official? This is a required field and I do not see my University listed, therefore, I checked "Other". It seems as though mostly medical centers are listed. My institution is an academic institution. Would the contact person be someone from my School's grants office or the director of the financial office?

- **Answer:** The institutional business official is the person in the Sponsored Projects office responsible for signing off on all applications submitted by the institution.

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Question: For renewal applications, should letters of recommendation also focus on progress during first award period?

- **Answer:** Recommendations for renewal applications must focus on progress during the first award period and explicitly address publications and grant proposals submitted whether or not they were successful.

MENTORED VS. INDEPENDENT

Question: How necessary is to have a mentor? How necessary is it for that mentor to have NIH funding? How necessary is it for that mentor to be at your home institution/university? Lastly, in your discipline?

- **Answer:** It is not required or necessary to have a mentor or for your mentor to have NIH funding; however, the purpose of the Loan Repayment Program is to recruit and retain scholars to become NIH funded researchers, specifically clinical researchers and health disparity researchers. Therefore, the guidance is:

An LRP applicant should apply as an independent researcher if one or more of the items listed below apply:

- the applicant has a full-time faculty position;
- the applicant received a start-up package for support of his/her independent research;
- the applicant has research space dedicated to his/her own research;
- the applicant may be the responsible supervisor for graduate students, and/or hire technical support or postdoctoral fellows; and/or
- the applicant is eligible to apply for independent research funding as the PD/PI of a Federal or non-Federal research grant.

An LRP applicant should apply as a mentored research scientist if one or more of the items listed below apply:

- the applicant's research is partially funded by another investigator's grant(s);
- the applicant's research is conducted entirely in another investigator's assigned space;
- the applicant is not allowed to submit an application as the PD/PI of an NIH research grant application (e.g., R01, a subproject leader on a Program Project (P01) or Center Grant (P50));
- the applicant lacks other rights and privileges of faculty, such as attendance at faculty meetings; and/or
- the applicant is receiving support and protected time from a fellowship or career development award.

When starting an application, the applicant will need to choose one of the two (they are not separate applications). Independent researchers may have mentors, they are not required to include their mentors in their applications (although they typically include them anyway). (<https://www.lrp.nih.gov/az-index>). There is no penalty to applying as a mentored

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researcher if you have received independent funding; however, a researcher who is not yet fully independent as evidenced by funding on which the applicant is the PI for at least \$100,000 per year from a source external to the employing institution may be poorly reviewed.

Question: Am I accurate in my understanding of a mentored research scientist versus an independent researcher in considering my role as a post-doctoral fellow to be a mentored research scientist?

- **Answer:** Yes, that is accurate.

Question: If I received a research supplement several years ago, as a postdoc (exceeding \$100,000) but am currently not a PI but work more in a research administrative role, am I still considered independent?

- **Answer:** As the recipient of a research supplement and a postdoctoral fellow, you are not considered to be independent. Administrative Supplements are awarded to the PI of the parent grant not to the person supported on the supplement.

Question: As a research faculty but not a PI on my own project, am I considered independent, or mentored?

- **Answer:** The guideline is that if you have not received an R level grant from the NIH or a grant from another federal agency for \$100,000 per year or more where you are the Principal Investigator, you are still considered to be in a mentored position.

Question: I checked the items listed under 'independent' and 'mentored' scientist to determine which I would fall under since I am a newly appointed assistant professor and I have more 'yes'es to 'independent' than 'mentored.' However, I came across a FAQ document that stated that if you have not received an R level award yet, then you are considered 'mentored.' I have not received an R-level award yet, but my situation looks like I fit more as an 'independent' researcher based on the list under the A-Z index. Based on your opinion, what category should I consider myself when I put in my LRP application?

- **Answer:** The guideline is that if you have not received an R level grant from the NIH or a grant from another federal agency for \$100,000 per year or more where you are the Principal Investigator, you are still considered to be in a mentored position.

MENTORS

Question: How many mentors do you need when applying for the LRP?

- **Answer:** There is no requirement for a specific number of mentors; however, a mentorship team is an important contributor to successful career development. We recommend that, as with a K (career development) award, applicants develop a mentorship team to work with them in specific areas they determine to be crucial to career development. Mentor strengths should complement each other and the applicant should address that complementarity in the mentorship plan along with the mentor's track record with mentees and a clear, detailed and

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specific timeline of when meetings will take place and dates for deliverables. Training or mentoring plan (when appropriate) should include a detailed discussion of the training or mentoring plan, including a discussion of the research methods and scientific techniques to be mastered.

Question: Do all mentors have to be NIH funded? Is an applicant still competitive if mentors are funded from other organizations besides NIH?

- **Answer:** All mentors do not have to have NIH funding. An applicant with mentors funded by other organizations can still be successful; however, the purpose of the program is to support scholars to become independently funded NIH researchers. Therefore, it is recommended that at least 1 mentor have NIH funding to mentor the applicant in that funding process.

Question: Do all mentors have to be health disparities researchers?

- **Answer:** All mentors do not have to be health disparities researchers. However, the purpose of the program is to support scholars to become independent Health Disparities researchers. Therefore, it is recommended that at least 1 mentor can mentor the applicant in Health Disparities.

Question: What specific information are you looking for from mentors, in terms of how they plan to help the applicant?

- **Answer:** The applicant should discuss the mentors' record in mentoring researchers, funding history, and research productivity. Mentors should know the applicant well enough to comment on the research skills and the abilities of the applicant. This includes the applicants' research supervisor or most recent mentor and includes the following:
 - Rate the applicant with respect to previous training and experience to prepare for a research career
 - Commitment to a career in Health Disparities research
 - Potential for a successful career in Health Disparities research
 - Applicant's research related strengths and weaknesses and plans for addressing the weaknesses.

Question: For mentored applicants, are we required to report the source of funding if we are funded by the department or our PI's grant? Can we leave the funding section unanswered if we are mentored applicants?

- **Answer:** Whether mentored or independent, the applicant must state the source of funding for the research. The LRP contract does not support research; therefore, how the research is supported must be addressed.

Question: Since only 3 recommenders are required this year, is it better to have recommenders who are senior level faculty and NIH funded vs. a colleague who you have several publications with, but who is junior faculty?

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- **Answer:** Mentors and recommenders must have the experience necessary to assist the applicant in developing a career trajectory to become an independent health disparity researcher.

Question: As part of the personal statement, how much of it should focus on past research experiences versus short term academic and research goals?

- **Answer:** It is important to balance the focus of the personal statement to emphasize what has been done, what is being done and what will be done to develop a career as an independently NIH funded health disparities researcher.

Question: Will we receive notification if any information is requested from the institutional officer, mentor, etc.?

- **Answer:** It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all required information is included in the application packet. No notification will be given if information is omitted but the application may be withdrawn as incomplete.

Question: My mentor (PI) is at my institution but I will also train with a mentor at another university by spending some time training in their lab. Is this acceptable?

- **Answer:** Applicants are encouraged to work with mentors both within and outside of their home institution. It is important to clearly and specifically articulate how the mentorship team members complement each other in supporting the applicant's career development. A concrete timeline with frequency of meetings and specific deliverables are an important tool in discussing the mentorship and career development plans.

EMPLOYMENT

Question: I understand that a researcher is eligible for the LRP if they work 50% as an employee for a non-profit organization. However, they become ineligible if they receive any research funds or any type of salary from a for-profit organization.

- **Answer:** All applicants must be employed by a domestic, non-profit organization (such as University or Hospital). Additionally, the funding source (such as a grant) supporting the applicant's research project must also be from a domestic, non-profit organization (such as a government entity or foundation). Applicants may work part or full time but must engage in qualified research for a minimum of 20 hours per week (as an average) each quarter for the duration of their LRP contract.

An applicant that is either employed by or receives research support funding from a for-profit organization (such as a biotech or pharmaceutical company) is ineligible for an LRP award.

Question: If I am serving in the role of director for a non-profit health disparities organization, and manage several research projects, am I eligible for this opportunity?

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- **Answer:** The purpose of the LRP is to support scholars to become independently NIH funded health disparity researchers. A director or manager of research projects who is not involved directly as a researcher is not eligible to apply to the LRP.

Question: If this is correct, are there any circumstances where exceptions have been granted? Is there any way I could I be a part time employee of this non-profit (which meets the criteria) and receive some income from my consulting?

- **Answer:** There is no mechanism for a waiver or exemption from the required employment with a non-profit organization.

ELIGIBILITY: LOANS

Question: I thought I had read Perkins loans are not included.

- **Answer:** Perkins loans are included as eligible loans for the Loan Repayment Loan as long as they have not been consolidated with other prohibited loans.

Question: Do we not need to submit promissory notes anymore? Only the loan account statement?

- **Answer:** Promissory Notes are still required. If an applicant is unable to get a Promissory Note, additional Disclosure Statements/Disbursement Reports will be required to satisfy the promissory note requirement.

ELIGIBILITY: INDIVIDUALS

Question: Can individuals with a Master's degree qualify for the program?

- **Answer:** To qualify for both NIMHD Loan Repayment programs, a doctoral degree is required.

Question: How should we decide which project should be the LRP-Eligible project? Should the LRP-eligible project be those projects that are already funded? Or, can they be projects that are proposals under review?

- **Answer:** Appropriate research projects for the LRP funding period must be already funded research. There is no guarantee that proposals under review will be selected for funding and are therefore not appropriate for inclusion in an LRP application.

Question: When submitting a project that is a secondary data analysis that is supported by salary and start-up funds (but not an NIH grant), it is appropriate to apply as an independent researcher?

- **Answer:** It is not appropriate under those conditions to apply as an independent researcher. Unless the applicant has been awarded an R level grant as PI of \$100,000 or more per year, he/she must submit a mentored application.

Question: Is it possible to receive an LRP if you work at a teaching institution vs. a research institution? Do you know approximately what percentage of applicants at teaching institutions have received the LRP?

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- **Answer:** It is possible to receive an LRP if you work at a teaching institution vs. a research institution; however, the applicant must work harder to create an appropriate research environment to support the development of an independent NIH funded health disparity research career. Mentors do not have to be at the home institution

Question: Do the loans need to be in “repayment”? What if I have a one-year grace period?

- **Answer:** Loans do not have to be in repayment but they do need to be in good standing.

Question: Do I still qualify if I have an NIA diversity supplement?

- **Answer:** Yes.

Question: I'm reaching back out to you to learn more about my LRP renewal application. I wanted to learn more about my case specifically because the LRP has been so instrumental in my career. Since the tenure of receiving my first LRP, I've received a K99/R00 award, begun a tenure-track position, and have amassed an extensive publication record. I am wondering if I am no longer eligible to receive the LRP because I have transitioned to a faculty position.

- **Answer:** You are eligible to receive the LRP as long as you continue to conduct health disparity (L60) or qualified clinical research (L32). There are no career related limitations on eligibility except that you continue to pursue a career as an independently funded health disparities researcher.