

# LRP Technical Assistance Webinar July 30, 2015

## Frequently Asked Questions

### DLR link to FAQ

<http://www.lrp.nih.gov/faq/index.aspx>

Apply online by 8.p.m. ET on November 16 at

<http://www.lrp.nih.gov>

NOTICES [http://www.lrp.nih.gov/policy\\_and\\_guidance/index.aspx](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/policy_and_guidance/index.aspx)

[NOT-15-123 Extramural Loan Repayment Program for Health Disparities Research \(LRP-HDR\) \(L60\)](#)

[NOT-15-125 Extramural Clinical Research Loan Repayment Program for Clinical Researchers from Disadvantaged Backgrounds \(LRP-IDB\) L32](#)

### Tutorials

<https://webmeeting.nih.gov/p81264103/?launcher=false&fcsContent=true&pbMode=normal>

[https://www.training.nih.gov/mentoring\\_guidelines](https://www.training.nih.gov/mentoring_guidelines)

### TIPS:

[http://www.lrp.nih.gov/pdf/0310\\_1\\_application\\_tips.pdf](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/pdf/0310_1_application_tips.pdf)

### Key Definitions

HD populations [http://www.lrp.nih.gov/about\\_the\\_programs/health\\_disparities.aspx](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/about_the_programs/health_disparities.aspx)

### Qualifications for disadvantaged backgrounds

[http://www.lrp.nih.gov/about\\_the\\_programs/clinical\\_disadv\\_backgrounds.aspx](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/about_the_programs/clinical_disadv_backgrounds.aspx)

### Submission

1. When does the submission open? When is the application deadline? When can you begin preparing your online application so it is ready for the submission by the opening Sept 1?

Electronic forms are available on September 1<sup>st</sup> to start the application process. The deadline is November 16<sup>th</sup>. Please don't wait until the last minute to apply.

### Eligibility

1. I am considering applying for the following Veterans Health Administration Fellowship: **Postdoctoral VA Advanced Fellowship Program**. The Fellowship involves a stipend paid by the VA and my training would include didactic experiences, clinical experiences, and research. Does applying for this postdoc disqualify me for the LRP?

Yes.

Individuals who receive any research funding support or salary from a for-profit institution or organization, or Federal Government employees working more than 20 hours per week; (Final Rule: <https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2013/04/05/2013-07737/national-institutes-of-health-loan-repayment-programs#sec-68-5> Approved: March 27, 2013. Kathleen Sebelius, Secretary)

2. Amount of indebtedness?

**Qualified Educational Debt** - you must have total qualified educational debt equal to or in excess of 20 percent of your institutional base salary at the time of award, which will be between July and September annually. Institutional base salary is the annual amount the organization pays for your appointment, whether the time is spent on research, teaching, patient care, or other activities. Institutional base salary excludes any income that you may earn outside of the duties of the organization. Institutional base salary may not include or comprise any income (salary or wages) earned as a federal employee. For renewal applications, it is not necessary to satisfy the 20 percent educational debt-to-institutional base salary requirement.

**LRP and Other Grant Funding**

1. How does submitting an LRP ~~grant~~ before a research grant affect your chances of being funded? Is it advised to wait to submit an LRP ~~grant~~ until after a research grant has been submitted?

There is no association between an LRP contract and an application for a grant. One does not have to wait to submit an LRP application but should discuss plans for submission of research grants in the personal statement as well as in the bio-sketch and career development/mentorship plans. The receipt of a grant may have a positive influence on whether or not an LRP application is well-reviewed as it provides direct evidence of progress toward a career as an independent researcher; however, the two processes are not associated.

The Loan Repayment Program awards contracts NOT ~~grants~~.

2. How essential are having grants, or grants under review, to a successful application?

Having grants or grants under review are not essential to a successful application. A well-developed, carefully explained research plan that provides evidence that the applicant understands and is engaged in the research process is very important.

**Research Plan**

1. Are projects that include qualitative methods (even though using biomarkers and other methodological approaches) less likely to be funded?

Data collection methods are not prioritized in either scientific review or funding decisions. A well developed and carefully explained methodology section that appropriately addresses how to answer the research questions of the application along with a thorough and thoughtful data analysis section will go a long way to convincing reviewers of research potential whatever the methods employed in the project.

## **Mentorship**

2. In what sections is it recommended that one can discuss the mentorship team?

One should discuss the mentorship team and how each member qualifies as a mentor and what will be contributed to the applicant's development as an independent investigator in the Career Development section. Concrete activities should be described with deliverables tied to a timeline. Mention may also be made in the Research Plan and the Personal Statement.

3. How many mentors do you need when applying for the LRP?

LRPs are not mentored research awards, such as the fellowship (F) and career development (K) awards, but because many LRP applicants are in the early stages of their careers, often they are in mentored situations. Make sure your mentor is a recognized expert in your field, has published extensively, and has grant support, preferably from NIH. Work with your mentors on their parts of the application to ensure that the mentoring plan accurately reflects all of the support you have available for your research. If you have more than one mentor, be sure that the role each mentor plays is clearly defined ([http://www.lrp.nih.gov/pdf/0310\\_1\\_application\\_tips.pdf](http://www.lrp.nih.gov/pdf/0310_1_application_tips.pdf)).

4. Do all mentors have to be NIH funded? Is an applicant still competitive if mentors are funded from other organizations besides NIH? Does NIH funding have to be currently active or will a history of NIH funding suffice?

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 important that at least 1 mentor have NIH funding.

5. Do all mentors have to be health disparities researchers?

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 important that at least 1 mentor have publications relevant to Health Disparities.

6. My current research mentor on the project I intend to submit with my LRP does not currently have NIH funding (however, does have a history of NIH funding). Can I submit a research mentor that has NIH funding but is not directly involved with my project?

Yes. You and your mentor have to state in what ways s/he will work with you to help you to develop a career as an independent health disparities researcher.

7. Do research mentors have to be from my institution?

No. They can be from any institution.

8. Can the letters of recommendation be provided by individuals on the mentorship team?

Letters of recommendation should be provided by individuals on the mentorship team who know the applicant and their work very well and can address in a detailed manner the applicant's potential for a career as an independent investigator.

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

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:

1. Rate the applicant with respect to previous training and experience to prepare for a research career
  2. Commitment to a career in Health Disparities research
  3. Potential for a successful career in Health Disparities research
  4. Applicant's research related strengths and weaknesses
  5. Overall recommendation
10. If you previously have been a PI but are not currently, do you still need a mentor and plan?

Whether you are currently a PI may or may not have relevance on whether you need a mentor or mentorship plan depending on where you are in your career and how your research time will be funded. This is something better discussed with a Program Official.

### **Research Plan**

1. 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?

Many applicants work on more than 1 project. If you describe more than 1 project, be sure to discuss how the work is related so you do not appear scattered and unfocused.

### **Sample Populations**

1. 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 disparity populations. Is this true?  
Yes. People with disabilities are not included in the legal definition of Health Disparity populations as yet.
2. A. Can you please let me know whether research with international populations is allowable within the program? I am working with individuals affected and displaced by conflict in Ukraine, and the work involves training local providers in community mental health interventions and assessing access and impact among service users (i.e. disadvantaged and displaced Ukrainians). Can this fit under the Health Disparity Population definition sub-categories of "socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and rural populations"?

B. My question is about the eligibility of researchers who conduct research related to health disparity populations abroad. Being based in the Department of International Health, most (though not all) of my research is related to socioeconomically disadvantaged and rural populations in low and middle-income countries.

Research must be directed toward building a career as a Health Disparities researcher and the issues must be applicable to US health disparity populations.

3. International populations are allowable; however, how realistic is it to apply when working with international populations? Is there a record of funding such applications?

We have awarded LRP contracts to investigators working in international settings with international populations.

### **Application--Process**

1. Does the LRP submission require the new NIH bio-sketch format?

The bio-sketch template will be available in the Online Application on September 1<sup>st</sup> of this year.

2. In the bio-sketch, should grant proposals be listed only if funded or under review?

Please list all grants—in submission, funded, not funded. Grant applications are important indicators of productivity and movement toward independence and support the case the applicant is building for a trajectory to becoming an independent health disparities researcher.

### **Application--Changes**

1. What if I have publications accepted after the submission?

We cannot accept changes to an application after the submission date. The bio-sketch should include manuscripts that have left the applicant's desk for review and be appropriately labeled as to the stage of review—Submitted, Revise and Resubmit, In Press.

2. A change of institution after the submission?

We cannot accept changes to an application after the submission date.

After the contract is awarded, you should notify the NIH LRP of any changes to your institution during the two-year period, and we will provide you with instructions on requesting NIH approval for the changes to your institution. It is recommended that you advise us of these changes 2 months prior to their effective date, to allow sufficient processing time within the NIH.

### **Institutional contacts electronically transmit a certification to the NIH Division of Loan Repayment that:**

1. Assures the applicant will be provided the necessary time and resources to engage in the research project for the period of the Loan Repayment Program contract (two years for new and one or two years for renewal)

2. Assures the applicant is or will be engaged in qualifying research for an average of 20 hours per week (a total of 240 hours spent on research during a 12-week quarter, or a total of 260 hours spent on research during a 13-week quarter)
  3. Certifies the sponsoring entity is a domestic non-profit institution (exempt from tax under 26 USC 501)
  4. Confirms the applicant's institutional base salary
3. A change of research plan after the submission?

You should notify the NIH LRP of any changes to your research assignment during the two-year period, and we will provide you with instructions on requesting NIH approval for the changes to your research project. It is recommended that you advise us of these changes 2 months prior to their effective date, to allow sufficient processing time within the NIH.

4. What happens if I can't find a research job?

If you are unable to establish qualifying research assignments for the two-year period, you should consider reapplying when you are in a better position to comply with the contract provisions. Loan repayment is expected to be offered every year.

### **Review**

1. 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?

While submitted in November, the Institute does not receive applications to review until January 15<sup>th</sup>. Depending on the program, the Loan Repayment Program receives from hundreds to more than a thousand applications. Applications must be internally scientifically and administratively reviewed prior to being sent to peer reviewers. Reviews are conducted through Internet Assisted Review over a period of months not in a one or two day session as are NIH grant mechanisms.

2. Is Early Investigator status considered during the peer review process as with the R01/R21 mechanisms?

Early Investigator status is not a consideration for the LRP contracts. Applicants from all career stages are eligible to apply and are evaluated on their potential for an independent research career.

### **Feedback**

1. I heard that the program does not provide feedback of reviewer comments on grants. Is this true, and if so, why, given the extensive time of review afforded?

Feedback for LRP contracts can be received after from the Program Official managing the program.

2. For those who applied last year, if we haven't heard yet about the funding status of the application, is it safe to assume we were not funded and start preparing a new application?

No funding decisions have been made at this time. To be safe it would be better to start preparing a new application and if the applicant receives notification of funding then nothing has been lost.

## **Loan Repayment**

1. Once awarded, are recipients still required to continue making monthly payments as usual?

Whether the awardee needs to continue making monthly payments is the sole discretion of the lender/servicer. The Division of Loan Repayment recommends that all awardees contact his or her lender/servicer after the initial payment has been disbursed in late October/early November. At that time, awardees can discuss with the lender/servicer whether the Loan Repayment can be used as a substitute for monthly payments.

2. And if awarded, how might it affect chances of getting loan forgiveness under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Act?

There is no current service obligation conflict between the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Act and the Loan Repayment Program. However, this may change in the future.