

# Technical Assistance Webinar for PAR-23-144

## STrengthening Research Opportunities for NIH Grants (STRONG): Structured Institutional Needs Assessment and Action Plan Development for Resource Limited Institutions (RLIs) (UC2 - Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

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**Webinar starts at 2 PM (ET)**



**NIH** National Institute  
on Minority Health  
and Health Disparities

# Zoom Video Webinar Tips



**Participants may ask questions using the chat feature.**

**Please no questions about a specific application.**

**Questions will be answered at the end of the webinar.**

**The webinar will be recorded. However, email of the zoom document is difficult due to the size.**

# Agenda



- I. Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) background and objectives
  - a. Categories of RLIs.
  - b. Application components
- II. Peer review of applications
  - a. Review Process
  - b. Review Criteria
- III. Timeline and Questions

# Part I:

# NOFO Background and Objectives



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# Purpose of the NOFO



The purpose of the STRONG-RLI Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) is to promote biomedical research capacity needs assessments by Resource-Limited Institutions (RLIs) and then to use the results of the assessments to create action plans for meeting identified needs.

The program's goal is to increase competitiveness in the biomedical research enterprise and foster institutional environments conducive to research career development.

# Background



- Innovation is dependent upon a pool of highly talented scientists from diverse backgrounds who will help to further NIH's mission
- NIH is committed to assisting RLIs in building institutional research capacity. Scientists at RLIs are critical to advancing knowledge in the biomedical research enterprise.
- Structured needs assessments to examine research and organizational capabilities can offer metrics, develop benchmarks and action items to increase the competitiveness for NIH, and other funding opportunities.

# Relevant Definitions



## What are Resource Limited Institutions (RLIs)?

1. Have received an average of **\$0 to \$25 million per year** (total costs) of NIH Research Project Grant (RPG) support for any three of the last five years.
2. Institutions with a **mission to serve historically underrepresented populations** in biomedical research that award degrees in the health professions

# Two Categories of RLIs



## 1) Low Research Active (LRA):

- An undergraduate or graduate degree granting institution with less than six million dollars in NIH research project grant (RPG) support per year in three of the last five years.
- In addition, for undergraduate granting institution with at least 35% of students supported by Pell grants.

## 2) High Research Active (HRA):

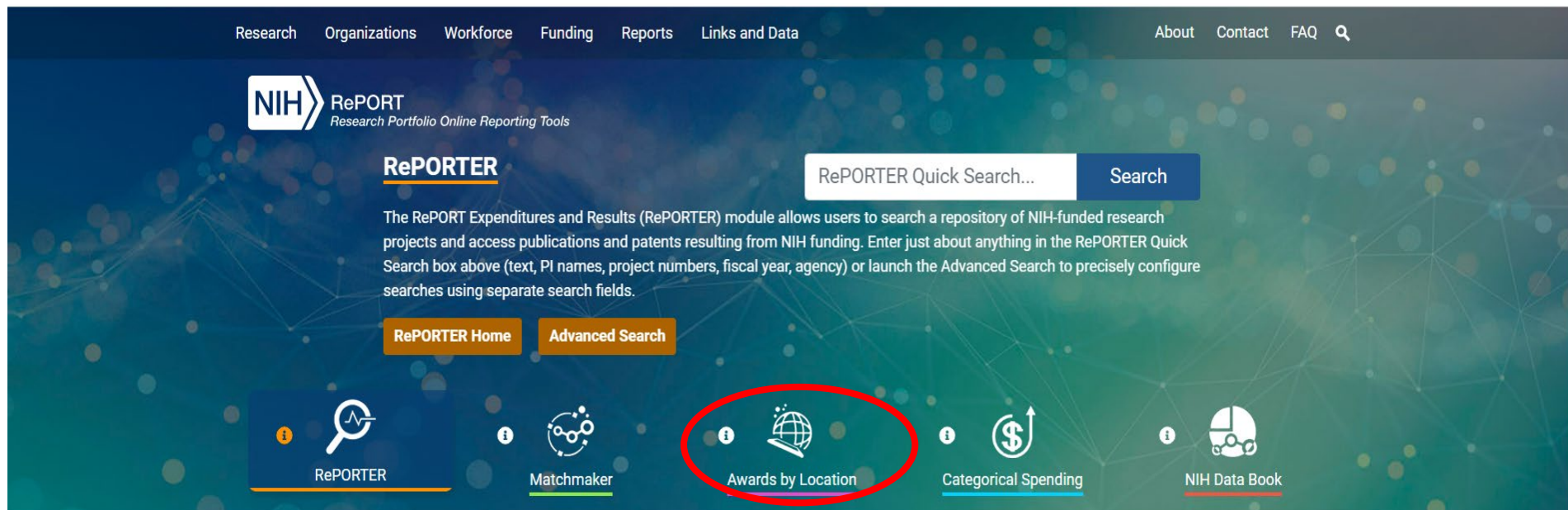
- An RLI that grants doctoral degrees and
- Had between 6M to 25 million dollars in NIH RPG support per year in three of the last five years.

Both LRA and HRA must have a historical or current mission to support underrepresented groups in biomedical sciences.



# Determining Organizational Funding Levels by Manually Compiling Data from RePORT's Award by Location Tool

1. Go to the RePORT home page: <https://report.nih.gov>
2. Click on Awards by Location



The screenshot shows the RePORT website homepage. At the top, there is a navigation menu with links for Research, Organizations, Workforce, Funding, Reports, Links and Data, About, Contact, and FAQ. Below the navigation is the RePORT logo and a search bar labeled 'RePORTER Quick Search...'. The main content area features a description of the RePORTER module and two buttons: 'RePORTER Home' and 'Advanced Search'. At the bottom, there is a row of five icons representing different tools: RePORTER, Matchmaker, Awards by Location (circled in red), Categorical Spending, and NIH Data Book.

## Welcome to Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT)

In addition to carrying out its scientific mission, the NIH exemplifies and promotes the highest level of public accountability. To that end, the Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools provides access to reports, data, and analyses of NIH research activities, including information on NIH expenditures and the results of NIH supported research.

## Spotlight

### [NIH COVID-19 Research](#)

Explore NIH's comprehensive summary of ongoing COVID-19 research, including funding, clinical trials, and more.

[Preview a modernized RePORTER](#), which offers faster searches and mobile-friendly interface.

# Determining Organizational Funding Levels by Manually Compiling Data from RePORT's Award by Location Tool

3. Select the **Fiscal Year** of interest (the tool searches one year at a time, so you would need to re-run the query for each of the last 5 fiscal years):
4. Select Funding Mechanism (RPG (Non-SBIR/STTR))
5. Start Typing the organization name in **Organization** and click **Select**.
6. Select the correct organization from the pop-up box and click **Submit Query**.

**FUNDING**

HOME > Funding > NIH Awards By Location

## NIH Awards by Location & Organization

Explore year-by-year NIH funding by institution, state, congressional district, and more!

CURRENT

Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools (RePORT)

There were 35 records that contain "University of M".

<input type="radio"/>	CHARLES R. DREW UNIVERSITY OF MED & SCI - LOS ANGELES, CA
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MAINE ORONO - ORONO, ME
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM - , ME
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI - BLANTYRE,
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER - MANCHESTER,
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MANNHEIM - ,
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALT CO CAMPUS - BALTIMORE, MD
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALTIMORE - BALTIMORE, MD
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND COLLEGE PK CAMPUS - COLLEGE PARK, MD
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EASTERN SHORE - PRINCESS ANNE, MD
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND SYSTEM - , MD
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST - AMHERST, MA
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS BOSTON - BOSTON, MA
<input type="radio"/>	UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS DARTMOUTH - NORTH DARTMOUTH, MA

By Organization | By IC | By PI | By Location | By Funding Mechanism | Data

Graphical presentation of the Report application

# Determining Organizational Funding Levels by Manually Compiling Data from RePORT's Award by Location Tool

7. Scroll down the page to see query results and select **Institution** from the drop down in the table header.
8. Use the **Export to Excel** feature or use the by **Funding Mechanism** tab to drill down to the grant level data.



## NIH Awards by Location & Organization

Explore year-by-year NIH funding by institution, state, congressional district, and more!



Data as of 07/17/2023

Fiscal Year :    
 Institute/Center :  **SELECT**   
 Funding Mechanism :  **SELECT**   
 FOA :    
Format: RFA-IC-09-003 or PA-09-003

Location :  **SELECT**   
 Congressional District :  **SELECT**   
 Organization Type :  **SELECT**   
 Organization :  **SELECT**   
 Contains  Begins with

**SUBMIT QUERY** **RESET QUERY**

- By Organization**
- By IC
- By PI
- By Location
- By Funding Mechanism
- Data

**Note:** Although this list can be sorted by the amount of funding each organization receives, these data should not be interpreted as a ranking of institutions by NIH. NIH's use of [multiple principal investigator](#) awards makes calculations of the total funding received by individual departments impractical and there are multiple ways in which the funding data can be aggregated across universities' schools and departments that can alter the ordering of institutions.

Prior to 2011, NIH reported the dollar amount of administrative supplements but, because they are supplements to existing projects, did not count these supplements as "awards". As a result, every year there may have been a small number of organizations that received NIH funding but appear in this table as having "0" (zero) awards.

These data do not include projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. For a list of those projects, please visit <https://report.nih.gov/recovery>.

For consistency in reporting on past fiscal years, this site uses frozen information for past fiscal years, and this may differ from current information displayed on [RePORTER](#). Upon completion of each fiscal year, research and development contract records are integrated with frozen grant records and posted in December. Institutions may review their grant records and [request updates](#).

Show All  Group By System/Main Campus <sup>BETA</sup>

**EXPORT TABLE**

Organization	City	State	Country	Awards	Funding
UNIVERSITY OF M.		MA	UNITED STATES	2	\$1,180,971

### UNIVERSITY OF M. awards summary for Fiscal Year 2023

Funding Mechanism	Dollar Amount	Awards
RPGs - Non SBIR/STTR	\$1,180,971	2
Total	\$1,180,971	2

# Required Components

The following components are required for each application:

- A. Research Needs Assessment
- B. Development of Institutional Action plan
- C. Governance and structure of steering committee



# Need Assessment

## **Institutional Needs-Assessment for research capacity section describe:**

- Physical research facility
- Methods of measuring student/faculty outcomes
- Tools and instruments for needs assessment
- The needs for research infrastructure and current scientific research areas of interest.
- The outcomes of any capacity-building or infrastructure grants.
- The investigative team and relevant expertise in needs assessment.
- Student enrollment in the biomedical areas, and
- Student enrollment who are Pell-grant eligible (for LRA applications);
- The current level of student and faculty participation in research.
- The sponsored programs administration



# Needs assessment topics (1 of 3)

## Administrative

- Establishing or enhancing the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP), examining efficiencies and staffing requirements and personnel needs for administrative support
- Available resources for effective business practices, automation, information dissemination, documentation and tracking progress for research activities,
- Process management and process improvement for grant application, grant award, and grant administration.



# Needs assessment topics (2 of 3)

## Research

- Research infrastructure-
  - physical research facilities, lab equipment, and computing resources,
  - support staff, professional development, laboratories.
- Research readiness in areas, such as basic, behavioral or clinical research,
- Grantsmanship support, current scientific research areas of interest.
- Capacity to conduct Human Subjects Research
- Capacity for Community Engagement research
- Partnerships/ collaboration with other academic institutions, the public sector, and community-based organizations.



# Needs assessment topics (3 of 3)

## Student and Faculty

- Training needs, Mentoring/Sponsorship, faculty development.
- Student resources for research and for post-bac and graduate career progression in biomedical research
- Research staff recruitment and benefits packages, retention bonuses,
- Faculty teaching workloads that allow time for research pursuits
- Institutional policies for assessment of teaching versus research assignments and support
- Tenure evaluations of faculty services for research, community engagement, protected time for research





# Development of Institutional Action Plans

- After completion of the needs assessment, the recipient institutions are expected to develop an action plan.
- The outcomes of the needs assessment should determine the capacity building interventions that the institution can undertake to strengthen the institutional framework and research capacity.
- The Institutional Action Plan that will be developed is expected to be supported by the institutional leader.



# Development of Action Plans

- Describe the approaches for developing an Institutional Action Plan.
- Describe steps that will be undertaken to ensure identified needs assessment activities lead to action plans for the long-term strengthening of research capacity.
- Include an institutional commitment to achieving the goals and objectives of the proposed project and activities signed by institutional leadership.



# Governance and Structure of Steering Committees

- The Steering Committee (SC) will serve as the primary governing and oversight board for the cooperative agreement.
- Describe the composition and the activities of the steering committee. Describe the desired expertise of its members. Include the frequency of meetings and any other relevant information.
- The membership of the SC consists of the PD(s)/PI(s), the NIH Project Coordinator, and any additional participants deemed necessary



# Other Components

## Timeline and Milestones:

- Describe the timeline for the needs assessment and action plan activities.
- The timeline should be realistic given the time needed to develop the approaches/tools and collect the proposed data.
- Describe how the program goals/aims will be aligned with milestones and metrics.

## Letters of Support:

- Institutional Eligibility Letter for HRA or LRA
- Institutional Commitment Letter.



# Letter of Intent

## Due August 18, 2023

- Descriptive title of proposed activity
- Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the PD(s)/PI(s)
- Names of other key personnel
- Participating institution
- Number and title of this funding opportunity

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# Award Budget

## Funds Available and Anticipated Number of Awards

- ❖ The number of awards is contingent upon NIH appropriations and the submission of a sufficient number of meritorious applications.

## Award Budget

- ❖ Application budgets for direct costs should not exceed \$250,000/year.

## Award Project Period

- ❖ The scope of the proposed project should determine the project period. The maximum project period is three years.



# Resources on UNITE Websites

UNITE: <https://www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism/unite>

UNITE-Related Funding Opportunities

<https://www.nih.gov/ending-structural-racism/unite-related-funding-opportunities>

Sign up for receiving updates



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# ENDING STRUCTURAL RACISM

Ending Structural Racism

Contact Us

Sign Up for Updates

## NIH Offices Involved in Racial Equity and Inclusion

NIH Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

NIH Office of Human Resources

NIH Civil Program

NIH Scientific Workforce Diversity Office

NIH Office of Extramural Research

NIH Office of Intramural Research

## UNITE At a Glance



### UNITE Progress Report

This inaugural report highlights select accomplishments associated with UNITE's four focus areas, centering on UNITE's initial impact on health disparities and minority health research funding, the external biomedical and behavioral workforce, and NIH staff. The report also describes UNITE's genesis and their plans for expanding UNITE's efforts.



### UNITE Co-Chair's Corner

Monthly updates from UNITE's co-chairs and committee leadership.



### Advisory Committee Updates

UNITE priorities and updates shared during the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) meetings.



### UNITE-Related Funding Opportunities

How UNITE helps NIH to provide research funding for greater innovation.



### Inclusiveness is Powerful

NIH diversified imagery helps reflect rich diversity of the NIH workforce.



### Events

UNITE presents the latest data and ideas on diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility in the biomedical workforce and in research.



### Diversity Funding Opportunities

Funding opportunities across NIH that are related to diversity.





# Part II:

# Peer Review of Applications

<https://grants.nih.gov/news/virtual-learning/podcasts.htm>



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# UC2 Program Peer Review

- ❖ Applications will be assessed for **completeness** by the Center for Scientific Review (**CSR**);
- ❖ NIMHD scientific Review Officer (**SRO**) will assemble a panel of experts from the extramural community to **peer review** the applications.



# Preparations for Peer Review

## ❖ NOFO Specific Characteristics & Review Criteria

- Overall program goals
- Mechanism characteristics specific to this NOFO
- Review Criteria: Specific to this NOFO in Section V
  - Additional Review Criteria/Considerations (e.g. Human Subjects/Budgets, etc.)

## ❖ Administrative Review of Applications

- **NOFO requirements:** whether the applications are **complete** as required by the NOFO and have the appropriate sections to be able to be reviewed?
- Which **personnel** are involved in each application and their institution affiliation?
- The **specific aims** stated in each application and **expertise** needed.



# Special Emphasis Panel (SEP) Reviewer Selection

## ❖ Scientific Expertise

- ❖ as defined in NOFO

- ❖ Collective content of the applications

## ❖ Attention to Conflict of Interest

## ❖ Diverse representation of opinion:

- gender
- demographics
- geography



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# Review Process

- ❖ Pre-Meeting: Reviewers submit the **written opinions/critiques**
- ❖ During Meeting: Reviewers discuss the applications and vote for **overall impact/final scores**
- ❖ After meeting: SRO writes the **resume** and finalizes the summary statements



# Peer Review Criteria

Only the review criteria described in section v of this NOFO will be considered in the review process. Applications submitted to the NIH in support of the NIH mission are evaluated for scientific and technical merit through the NIH peer review system.

## Overall Impact

- Reflects the likelihood for Project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s).

## 5-Scored Review Criteria

- Significance
- Investigator(s)
- Innovation
- Approach
- Environment



# Review Criteria- Specific to this NOFO

## Significance:

- How well does the application provide a vision for how the project will serve as a foundation for future research capacity building?
- To what degree the application describes clear pathways between the need assessment and action plan development research activities and future research efforts?
- To what extent is the proposed project likely to enhance institutional research capacity to conduct biomedical research?

## Investigator(s):

- To what extent do the PDs/PIs have the appropriate expertise to conduct the needs assessment, implement the proposed project, analyze the outcomes, and develop action plans?

## Innovation:

- How well does the applicant create approaches to fit their context and needs?
- Does the application employ novel approaches or methods to fulfill its purpose?



# Review Criteria- Specific to this NOFO

## Approach:

- To what extent does the applicant describe the tools and instruments for needs assessment, monitoring and evaluation of research capacity development activities?
- To what degree does the applicant identify metrics and indicators of success that will be used to assess the anticipated outcomes?
- Is the duration of the initial needs assessment stage adequate to develop action plans for short-term goals?
- To what degree is the structure and governance plan likely to lead to implementation of the proposed plan?
- Are these goals feasible and well developed on the timeline of the award?
- How well are the program goals/aims aligned with yearly milestones and are the details provided adequate?





# Review Criteria- Specific to this NOFO

## Environment:

- How strong is the level of institutional commitment to the project, including administrative and scientific support, to ensure the success of the project?
- How well do the letters of support demonstrate a strong commitment to the proposed activities?



# Additional Review Criteria

(included in the determination of the overall score)

- Protection for Human Subjects
- Inclusion of Women, Minorities, and Individuals Across the Lifespan
- Vertebrate Animals
- Biohazards



# Additional Review Considerations

(criteria not included in the determination of the overall score)

- Select Agent Research
- Resource Sharing Plans
- Authentication of Key Biological and/or Chemical Resources  
<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/reproducibility/guidance.htm>
- Budget and Period of Support



# UC2 Program Peer Review Meeting

All applications will be reviewed. Some applications may be “streamlined” -- not discussed (ND) :

- Applications may undergo a selection process in which only those applications deemed to have the highest scientific and technical merit (generally the top half of applications under review) will be discussed and assigned an overall impact score.

Final Impact Score based on average of all voting reviewers x 10

- Scores range from 10 (exceptional) to 90 (poor)

A summary statement for all applications would be available approximately 30 days after the review meeting. Contact Program Officer after receiving Summary Statements to discuss the details

**Do not contact the members of the review panel!**



# Videos on Peer Review Topics

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) has produced videos with an inside look at peer review for scientific and technical merit and with tips for preparing applications.

<https://public.csr.nih.gov/NewsAndPolicy/PeerReviewVideos>

## Resources for using eRA Commons

[https://era.nih.gov/era-training/era-videos.htm?q=era\\_training/era\\_videos.cfm#iar1](https://era.nih.gov/era-training/era-videos.htm?q=era_training/era_videos.cfm#iar1)

## Problems with Submission Processing

Always contact eRA Service Desk.

<https://grants.nih.gov/support/index.html>



# **Part III:**

## **Timeline for Submission, Review, and Selection of UC2 Awards**



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# Timeline

- Letter of Intent Due Date: August 18, 2023
- Application Due Date: September 18, 2023
- Peer Review Meeting: February 2024
- Council Review: May 2024
- Earliest Start Date: July 2024



# Frequently Asked Questions

- Is my institution eligible to apply for this NOFO?  
Answer: Please check the eligibility criteria listed in NOFO in Section III. There are specific NIH funding limits for LRA and HRA. Both LRA and HRA RLIs must have a historical or current mission to support underrepresented groups in biomedical sciences. Each institution should describe the specific category into which they fit and provide documentation to verify through institutional letters.
- Can we use the budget to purchase equipment's  
Answer: No
- Can I select assignment to specific Institute in my cover letter?  
Answer: Yes, you can suggest a specific NIH institute in your cover letter, make sure to include the specific research areas aligned with the Institute
- Should I name the members of the steering committee members:  
Answer: No





# Frequently Asked Questions

- Who to contact during the pre-submission phase?
  - Answer: Scientific contacts listed in the NOFO
- What happens after review?
  - Answer: Wait for summary statement to be released, then contact program officer listed for guidance
- Can I revise and resubmit my application?
  - Answer: Yes, you can revise and resubmit for the next NOFO receipt date
- When decisions will be made?
  - Answer: After council meeting each fiscal year



# Questions

