

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Identifying Individuals for the NIH Director's Early Independence Award (DP5)

<https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence>

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-24-005.html>

I write to request your assistance identifying outstanding junior scientists for the NIH Director's Early Independence Award. You may recall that this solicitation both limits the number of applicants and requires **significant institutional commitment**.

- Applicant will have the intellect, scientific creativity, drive, and maturity to **bypass** the traditional postdoctoral training period and launch an independent research career.
- Applicant will be provided with protected time to conduct the proposed research.
- Applicant must complete doctoral degree or clinical training between *May 1, 2023 and September 30, 2025*.
- Applicant must be in a non-independent research position at time of application.

The Perelman School of Medicine's internal deadline for applications is **Friday, May 31, 2024**. We will select up to two nominees to submit to the Vice Provost for Research who will determine the final nominees for the University.

BACKGROUND

The NIH Director's Early Independence Award Program supports exceptional investigators who wish to pursue independent research directly after completion of their terminal doctoral/research degree or clinical residency, thereby forgoing the traditional post-doctoral training period and accelerating their entry into an independent research career.

Time window for eligibility: Given the focus on early research independence, the receipt date of the terminal doctoral degree or end of post-graduate clinical training of the PD/PI must be between **May 1, 2023, and September 30, 2025**. 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.** The PD/PI must not have served as a postdoctoral fellow for more than 12 months following a previous, non-terminal doctoral degree (i.e., a postdoctoral fellowship served before May 1, 2023).

Preliminary Data: Not required.

Level of effort: In the first and second years of the project period, awardees must commit at least 9.6 person-months of effort to the Early Independence Award project each year (which is 80% effort per year). In years 3-5 of the project period, awardees may reduce their effort on the Early Independence Award project, but they must still conduct at least 9.6 person-months of general independent research each year (which is 80% effort per year).

Award Amount: Awards will be for up to \$250,000 in direct costs per year, plus applicable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs.

Award Project Period: The project period is limited to five years.

NOMINATION PROCESS

Applicants are advised to review the complete NIH RFA:

<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-24-005.html>

Each application must contain the following:

- I. **Title page:**
 - Name of the RFA: NIH Director's Early Independence Awards (DP5) RFA-RM-23-007.
 - Name of Nominee, current title, department, institution, contact information, date of completion of terminal doctoral degree or postgraduate clinical training.
 - **Note:** The receipt date of the terminal doctoral degree or end of post-graduate clinical training of the PD/PI must be between May 1, 2023, and September 30, 2025.
 - Title of the nominee's research proposal
 - Name of nominator: Title, department, contact information
 - Name of department chair, department, contact information

- II. **One letter of nomination** from applicant's Department Chair, Division Chief or Center or Institute Director which confirms: that the applicant will be appointed to the department during the grant period and will be provided with protected time to conduct the proposed research; that the department will make available appropriate lab space and resources and provide career development and enhancement opportunities; that the applicant is in a position to forgo the traditional postdoctoral training and become an independent researcher; and an overall assessment of the candidate's research abilities.

- III. **One-page research proposal** in a scientific area relevant to the NIH mission for which the investigator has demonstrated experience. Briefly describe the scientific challenge that you wish to address in your research. Why is this challenge significant to the biomedical/behavioral research community? What is the expected impact of your research on this challenge?

- IV. **One-page letter** describing how the Early Independence Award would accelerate your entry into an independent research position and why this would be of benefit to your career; and also describes your rationale for omitting post-doc; and provides evidence of training ability and leadership

- V. **Biosketch or CV**, including current and pending funding (if any).

Please submit all materials in a single pdf file in the order above to Kaitlyn Hagarty at kaitlyn.hagarty@pennterms.upenn.edu by **9:00am** on **Friday, May 31, 2024**. Subject line should be NIH EIA_Applicant's Surname_Applicant's First Name (e.g. NIH_EIA_Doe_Jane)

Questions can also be directed to Kaitlyn at kaitlyn.hagarty@pennterms.upenn.edu.