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Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA, R35) for ESIs, PAR-27-032

Disclaimer

This presentation and accompanying slides are for informational purposes only. They serve as an overview of NIH or NIGMS programs and are not meant to be comprehensive in coverage of all required components of a program or an application.

Applicants are responsible for following the instructions detailed in the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFOs), any Related Notices, and the [How to Apply – Application Guide](#).

Outline

- NOFO Overview
- Budget Overview
- Peer Review Overview

SimplerNOFO Initiative

Part of the HHS initiative to streamline funding opportunities for clarity and navigation.

Applicants will notice:

- ✓ More headings and shorter paragraphs
- ✓ Clearer, plain-language instructions
- ✓ Checklists and explicit step-by-step guidance
- ✓ Reduced "hidden instruction" surprises
- ✓ More intuitive overall structure

[More information available in this Nexus article](#)

***MIRA for ESIs* Program Goals**

Through this program, investigators can:

- Receive independent research funding early to start and sustain strong research careers.
- Explore new, unique research areas in the NIGMS mission.
- Take on ambitious, creative projects.
- Shift focus to include emerging techniques and technologies as needed.
- Devote more time to mentoring trainees in a stable research environment.

NIGMS *MIRA for ESIs* Program

- *MIRA for ESIs* provides support for research within [the NIGMS mission](#) in the laboratory of an [Early Stage Investigator \(ESI\)](#)
- For the purposes of the *MIRA for ESIs* NOFO, a research program is defined as a collection of scientific projects in an investigator's lab that are related to the mission of NIGMS
- One NIGMS research grant per Principal Investigator (PI) to support NIGMS-related research in an investigator's lab
- PI relinquishes other NIGMS research support with some exceptions (e.g., resource, training, small business grants)
- Requires 51% total research effort

NIGMS Research Areas

- NIGMS supports basic research that increases understanding of biological processes and lays the foundation for advances in disease diagnosis, treatment and prevention. See: [NIGMS Mission and Interest Areas](#)
- NIGMS supports research in certain clinical areas: anesthesiology; clinical pharmacology; sepsis; injury & critical illness. Mechanistic clinical trials at a single site are allowed.
- Contact [Scientific/Research Staff](#) **at least 6 weeks** prior to submission for advice on the suitability of the proposed research for NIGMS.
- Applications that are determined to be outside of the NIGMS mission will be returned without review.

MIRA for ESIs Eligibility

- Principal investigators who meet the following requirements are eligible to apply:
 - proposes research in an area within the NIGMS mission
 - has an ESI status = 'Yes' in eRA Commons
 - is appointed by an eligible institution and is permitted by that institution to serve as PD/PI on research grants.
- Only one PD/PI is permitted; Foreign institutions are not eligible

Early Stage Investigator (ESI): A PD/PI who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training (whichever date is later) within the **past 10 years** and **who has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.**

MIRA for ESIs NOFO and the How to Apply Application Guide

Follow the instructions detailed in [PAR-27-032](#) and [the How to Apply Application Guide](#).





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Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) for Early Stage Investigators (ESI)

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Agency: National Institutes of Health

Assistance Listings: 93.859 -- Biomedical Research and Research Training

Last Updated: May 13, 2026View version history on Grants.gov

Description

The Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) for Early Stage Investigators (ESIs) provides support for ESIs with a program of research that aligns with the NIGMS mission. MIRA distributes funding among promising investigators across the country. The goal is to boost scientific productivity and the chances for important breakthroughs. Through this program, investigators

Jump to all documents

Closing: February 6, 2029

Application process

This site is a work in progress. Go to [www.grants.gov](#) to apply, track application status, and subscribe to updates.

View on Grants.gov

Documents

Download all

File name	Description	Last updated
PAR-27-032-Full-Announcement.pdf	PDF for publication (This is version par-27-032-rev7 with standard file name convention for NIH NOFOs).	May 12, 2026 01:25 PM UTC



National Institute of General Medical Sciences

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MIRA for ESIs Application Receipt, Review, and Award Start Dates

Application due date	Scientific merit review	Advisory council review	Earliest start date
October 2, 2026	March 2027	May 2027	July 2027
February 3, 2027	July 2027	October 2027	December 2027
October 4, 2027	March 2028	May 2028	July 2028
February 3, 2028	July 2028	October 2028	December 2028
October 3, 2028	March 2029	May 2029	July 2029
February 6, 2029	July 2029	October 2029	December 2029

Resubmissions are not allowed. A PD/PI may submit a [new MIRA for ESIs application](#) as long as the PD/PI remains eligible as an ESI.

MIRA for ESIs Application

Application components

- Research strategy: 6 pages (background, recent progress, future research)
 - Scientific topics: within the [scientific mission of NIGMS](#)
 - **No specific aims**
- Biographical sketch: use the [SciENcv Common Forms](#), tailoring sections as discussed in NOFO
- Institutional commitment letter from Chair or Dean
- Data management and sharing plan
- Resource sharing plan (Does not include data)
- Biohazards (if applicable)
- Vertebrate animal and Human subject sections (if applicable)
- Budget forms
- Other forms and attachments (as required by the [How to Apply Application Guide](#))

Why are there no Specific Aims?

- MIRA is intended to fund a broad research program, not a narrow set of experiments.
- Research programs may have different, loosely related areas or themes.



Do not include a specific aims section

Do not use the term specific aims, aims, or other similar designations in the abstract or research strategy.

Research Strategy (6 page limit)

- **Background & key gaps (suggested ~1 - 1.5 pages)**
 - Describe the research area and identify gaps in current knowledge
- **Recent progress by the PI (suggested ~1 - 1.5 pages)**
 - Highlight your contributions from the past 5 years
- **Overview of future research plans (suggested ~3 - 4 pages)**
 - Describe key questions and challenges to be addressed
 - Explain why these questions matter
 - Outline general strategies (avoid detailed experimental plans)

Note: Preliminary data are not expected or required

Do not use standard headings of (Significance, Innovation, and Approach)

Biographical Sketch

Use [SciENCv Common Forms](#) for PD/PI **only**, tailored to NOFO requirements

- **Personal Statement may include:**

- Significant service to the scientific community (beyond your institutional duties)
- Notable contributions to mentoring

If you wish to explain factors that affected your past productivity, such as family care responsibilities, illness, disability, or military service, you may address in this section.

- **Contributions to Science:**

- Emphasize your contributions to science over the past 5 years

Current and pending support document is not required.

Do not present or include figures or preliminary data in biosketch.

Do not use hypertext other than what is allowed by the Common Form instructions

Letters of Support

Institutional commitment letter (required - applications without letter will be withdrawn)

- A letter from the department chair, dean, or other academic unit leader should describe institutional commitment to your development. This letter may include:
 - Institutional commitment and start-up packages
 - Available research space available to the PD/PI
 - Salary support commitment
 - Skills and career development opportunities
 - Mentoring during promotion and tenure
 - Career advancement prospects for non-tenure track applicants

Collaborator letters (optional)

- Limited to 1 page each, if included. Do not include biosketches for collaborators.

Mentor letters (not required, not encouraged)

- May include in the case of continuing collaboration.

Data Management and Sharing Plan

- A Data Management and Sharing Plan (DMS Plan) **is required** and is uploaded under “**Other Plan(s)**”
- NIH now requires use of the [2026 Pilot DMS Plan format](#). You can read more about [writing a Data Management and Sharing Plan](#).

Note: NIGMS views data management and sharing as an integral part of running a research program for which funding is being provided. We expect additional costs, if any, to be modest. Discuss with your Program Officer if you have questions.



MIRA for ESIs Budget

- You may request up to \$275,000 direct costs (DC) per year for 5 years
 - Cap includes equipment and Data Management and Sharing costs
- Do **not** include a detailed budget
 - Justify equipment costs, Data Management and Sharing costs, and any exclusions to F&A base rate
- No inflationary escalations
- Indirect costs should be requested

See PAR-27-032 for details about
how to complete the budget forms.

PD/PI Effort Requirements

- PD/PI required to devote at least 51% of the PD/PI's total research effort to MIRA
- Total research effort should include the PD/PI's combined research effort at all institutions where the PD/PI holds an appointment
- Report effort in person-months
- NIGMS staff will verify the MIRA research effort requirement met by using the Other Support documentation and will exclude support for which the purpose is education or training

Overlap during peer review

- An application is under review from the time of submission until the NIH issues the summary statement from that review.
- You **may** have an NIGMS R01 under review at the same time as a *MIRA for ESIs* application.
- You may **not** have any other **research** grants being considered by NIGMS under review at the same time as a *MIRA for ESIs*, regardless of which was submitted first.
- Discuss any potential situations with a program officer.

Applications being considered by NIGMS for funding have
“GM” in the grant number (e.g., 1 R35**GM**12345-67)

Review Information

- Scientific and technical merit of applications is determined by scientific peer review at Study Sections organized by CSR
 - [MRAA](#), [MRAB](#), [MRAC](#), [MRAD](#), [MRAE](#), [MRAF](#), SEPs as needed
- Approximately 50% of applications are discussed
- The discussed applications are assigned an overall impact score, no individual criterion scores
- All applications receive a written evaluation

Review Criteria

Scorable Review Criteria

- Significance
- Investigators
- Innovation
- Approach
- Environment

Additional Scorable Review Criteria

- Study Timeline; Inclusion Plans
- Protection for Human Subjects
- Vertebrate Animals
- Biohazards

Non-Scorable Review Criteria

- Authentication of Key Biological Resources
- Budget and Period of Support
- Resource Sharing Plans
- Data Management and Sharing Plan

Review considerations

- Is the proposed research program's scope and ambition appropriate for long-term pursuit to build a research program and to address the scientific questions being asked?
- Does the PD/PI demonstrate a record of productivity and scientific impact appropriate for the career stage and does the PD/PI show evidence of being creative and adaptable?
- Does the PD/PI have a strong potential to establish and sustain a successful independent research program?
- Does the PD/PI show promise as a mentor of scientific trainees?
- Does the PD/PI show potential to establish a record of professional service?

Carefully read the NOFO Review Criteria.

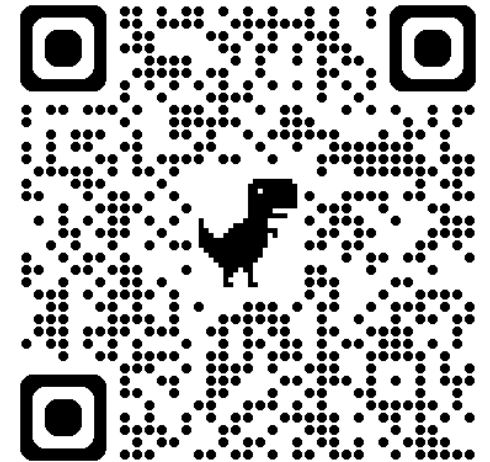
Review considerations (cont.)

- Will suitable creative strategies be used to address the research questions?
- Is there evidence that the research program will evolve appropriately as the work is performed?
- If it is a clinical trial, does the proposal use innovative designs such as platform trials, adaptive, including real-time adaptive methods, seamless Phase I/II designs, and Bayesian designs, as applicable. Does it use decentralized trial elements, including remote informed consent, remote study visits, and use of wearables?
- Will the environment help the PD/PI develop as an independent researcher?

Carefully read the NOFO Review Criteria.

MIRA for ESIs Resources

- *MIRA for ESIs* NOFO PAR-27-032:
<https://simpler.grants.gov/opportunity/9a4aeb2f-d0ac-403b-ac67-9d1fd24d9556>
- NIGMS MIRA Website:
<https://www.nigms.nih.gov/research/mechanisms/mira/pages/default.aspx>
- *MIRA for ESIs* FAQs:
<https://nigms.nih.gov/Research/mechanisms/MIRA/Pages/faqs-esi-mira.aspx>
- NIH website to applicants: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/how-to-apply-application-guide>



Contacts for MIRA for ESIs

Please contact a NIGMS program director in [your area of research](#) **BEFORE** you submit your application for advice on the suitability of the **proposed research for NIGMS.**

- Program Contacts (NIGMS): NIGMS-ESIMIRA@nigms.nih.gov
- Peer review (CSR): NOFOReviewContact@csr.nih.gov
- Financial and grants management: MIRA-FINANCIAL@NIGMS.NIH.GOV

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Questions?

Contact: NIGMS-ESIMIRA@nigms.nih.gov

Thanks for attending