



Opportunities\$: Follow this space to find the money.

Maximizing Investigators' Research Award (MIRA) (R35), what are they and should I apply?

The National Institutes of Health has a funding program called MIRA. The general concept of MIRA is to increase the efficiency of funding by providing investigators with greater stability and flexibility, thereby enhancing scientific productivity and the chances for important breakthroughs. The program is specific to NIH institutes so start with the Institute your science aligns with and see if they support the R35 mechanism.

Some unique aspects of R35 grants across NIH:

- a) The research encompasses a broader scope compared to R01 grants
- b) The flexibility that program-level support provides to the investigator, allowing her or him to pursue new research directions as opportunities arise.
- c) R35 for established investigators usually have a duration > 5yrs

We have provided a summary two different NIH institute R35 examples below

Early Stage and New Investigator R35. This is NIGMS specific

Eligibility. For ESI and New Investigator MIRA awards, the NIH eligibility guidelines apply. The PI is required to devote at least 51% of his/her time available for research to this award. The goal is to make MIRA program available to ESIs in their first independent faculty position.

Research program, not a project. A MIRA award funds a significant and ambitious research program in an investigator's laboratory. The proposed program encompasses a collection of individual projects within the mission of NIGMS, instead of an individual project that is relatively narrow focused. This funding mechanism offers stability and flexibility, allowing the investigator to pursue new and ambitious directions as opportunities arise over the course of funded research activities. Due to reduced time for writing and reviewing grants, it also gives researchers more time to conduct creative research and devote more time and energy to mentoring trainees.

Research strategy. A MIRA proposal proposes a significant and ambitious research program consisting of interrelated projects, not Specific Aims of an individual project. The proposal should provide a Background that identifies key questions or challenges of a specific research area and describe Recent Progress by the PI that supports the application. The proposal then

overviews the future research program that addresses the importance of the questions or challenges, but a detailed experimental plan is not expected. The overall strategy should be well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the goals of the research program. The theme or topic of the research program should be substantive and appropriate for long-term pursuit and appropriate in scope and ambition to address the scientific questions posed. It is important to clearly explain how the proposed research program allows the investigator to establish a uniquely independent place in the field of research.

Support letters. In addition to letters of support from collaborators, the MIRA proposal requires support letters from the institution's Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) in support of the PI's at least 51% commitment of effort and from the department chair, dean, or other academic unit leader testifying to the institutional commitment to development of the investigator.

Established Investigator: This description is NINDS specific

NINDS publishes RFAs for this mechanism. The last one was RFA-NS-19-037.

The R35 mechanism within NINDS is called the Research Program Award (RPA). These grants are for investigators whose record of research achievement demonstrates her/his ability to make major contributions to neuroscience and provide the freedom to embark on ambitious, creative, and/or longer-term research projects, without the constraints of specific aims.

This program leads to consolidation of NINDS funding so you should have > 1 NINDS R01 and should consider whether consolidation of your projects at something close to your average level of NINDS support is worth the advantages provided by the RPA program – 8 years of funding. Since RPA awards replace all or most of an investigator's NINDS funding, the PD/PI must devote at least 6 person months (i.e., the equivalent of 50% effort on for a full-year appointment, 66.67% on a 9-month appointment, or 100% on a 6-month appointment) to the RPA throughout the duration of the award period. RPAs will support the overall research programs of NINDS-funded investigators for up to 8 years, at a maximum level of \$750,000 direct costs per year.

As with most grants, it is always suggested to talk to your program officer about specifics.