

## The NIH Common Fund

The 2006 NIH Reform Act called for the NIH Common Fund to support important areas of emerging scientific opportunities, rising public health challenges, or knowledge gaps that deserve special emphasis and would benefit from conducting or supporting additional research that involves collaboration between two or more national research institutes or national centers, or would otherwise benefit from strategic coordination and planning. To this end, the Common Fund programs encourage transformative research that tackles the most critical challenges in biomedical research and translation. These are short term (5-10 year) programs that are intended to solve problems or build resources that will then catalyze research throughout the entire biomedical research enterprise. To date, the Common Fund has been used to support a series of short term, exceptionally high impact. The NIH Common Fund expects to support a total of 493 Research Project Grant awards in FY 2012.

NIH Common Fund programs are intended to be:

- **Transformative:** Must have high potential to dramatically affect biomedical and/or behavioral research over the next decade
- **Catalytic:** Must achieve a defined set of high impact goals within a defined period of time
- **Synergistic:** Outcomes must synergistically promote and advance individual missions of NIH Institutes and Centers to benefit health
- **Cross-cutting:** Program areas must cut across missions of multiple NIH Institutes and Centers, be relevant to multiple diseases or conditions, and be sufficiently complex to require a coordinated, trans-NIH approach
- **Unique:** Must be something no other entity is likely or able to do

The **NIH Common Fund** is managed by the Office of Strategic Coordination, part of the Division of Program Coordination, Planning and Strategic Initiatives (DPCPSI).

<http://commonfund.nih.gov/about.aspx>

### Examples of Grant Mechanisms

#### Transformative R01

The Common Fund's NIH Director's Transformative Research Projects Program (R01) was specifically created to support exceptionally innovative, high risk, original and/or unconventional research projects that have the potential to create or overturn fundamental paradigms. These projects tend to be inherently risky, but if successful can profoundly impact a broad area of biomedical research.

As compared to the other NIH Director's Programs, the Pioneer and New Innovator Awards, the primary emphasis of the Transformative Research Projects Program is on creative ideas—projects that have the potential to transform a field of science and to provide adequate support for the work—rather than creative individuals who have proven themselves to be innovative researchers and to provide them with funds to go in a new pioneering direction.

To facilitate submission and review of the most bold, creative and high impact proposals, the Transformative Research Projects Program is also piloting novel approaches to peer review and program management. The high degree of risk inherent to truly transformative research is expected and welcomed in proposals under the

Transformative Research Program. Transformative projects in any area of NIH interest are encouraged and are considered responsive to T-R01 funding opportunities.

### **Early Independence Award**

Recent trends show an increase in the length of the traditional scientific training period with a concomitant increase in the age at which scientists establish independent research careers. Although traditional post-doctoral training is likely most appropriate for the majority of new Ph.D.s and M.D.s, there is a pool of talented young scientists who have the intellect, scientific creativity, drive and maturity to flourish independently without the need for traditional post-doctoral training. Reducing the amount of time these scientists spend in training would provide them the opportunity to start highly innovative research programs as early in their careers as possible.