Understanding NIH Programs

Session Transcript: 2022-2023 Grants Conference Feb 1-2

Megan Columbus: Thanks for joining today's presentation on Understanding NIH Programs. My name is Megan Columbus, I'm the Communications Director at NIH's Office of Extramural Research. You may have already seen me in a previous session. I'll be serving as your moderator for today's session.

I'm very pleased to introduce you to the woman who's tasked with providing leadership on the development, implementation and evaluation of policies and programs to train, sustain and enhance the diversity of the future biomedical research workforce. Welcome, please, the Director of NIH's Division of Biomedical Research Workforce, Dr. Erika Boone. And before I hand to Erika the virtual podium, I just want to make one more introduction. Dr. Mohor Sengupta, also from NIH's Division of Biomedical Research Workforce, is going to be in the background helping to answer questions in the Q and A today. So thanks to you both for joining us, and let's go ahead and get started.

Erika Boone: Thank you so much, Megan, for the awesome introduction. I'd like to say good afternoon to everyone. Welcome to the 2023 NIH Grants Conference. I hope that you've been enjoying the sessions thus far. Tomorrow, we will have several panel discussions that are focusing on topics that I think that this group will find of interest, and that includes diversity within the biomedical research workforce, optimizing mentoring relationships and the NIH UNITE effort. I will be moderating all three of those panel discussions, so I hope that you will join us.

However, for this session this afternoon, it's going to be geared more so towards those individuals that are newer to the world policies programs of NIH. I'm going to give a high-level overview of NIH grants by career stage, and also talk about a few policies and programs, like the ESAP program, as well as family-friendly policies that can be helpful to navigating your research career during those early stages. I'll also provide some resources and tips for how to find information and stay abreast of the latest policies and programs at the NIH. So let's go ahead and get started.

Of course you already know that NIH was founded in 1880, and we are the primary U.S. agency responsibility for biomedical and research health, or health research. And we are the largest public funder of biomedical research in the world. Last year, NIH, in 2022, we had an operating budget of about $45 billion. A little under 5 percent was devoted to research training and career development awards. Almost 60 percent of the operating budget went towards funding more than 50,000 research project grants to more than 2500 universities, medical schools and other research institutions in every state. And of course, I forgot to turn off my Teams, so I have lots of people who are saying "yay for the conference session." So if you can hear my voice, stop Teaming me.

So you can see here that there are 27 different institute centers and offices here at the NIH. The office, or the Division of Biomedical Research Workforce, is located within the Office of Extramural Research under the Office of the Director. So of course there's one NIH, but each IC has its own mission, its own budget, its own activities, its own way of doing things. So how does everyone make sense of any of these things?

So we'll start off with giving some tips on how to engage with individuals from NIH. Who do you talk to? When do you talk to these individuals? So as you can see here, there are three different groups of individuals here at NIH that we're going to discuss very briefly. So, you have your Program Officer, your Scientific Review Officer, and your Grants Management Officer. So of course your Program Officer is the individual who's responsible for helping to identify areas of scientific need and priority areas. They communicate these NIH priorities to investigators within the extramural community, such as yourself, and they also communicate information back to IC leadership about the state of science and trends in their scientific areas. The Scientific Review Officer manages grant reviews. They appoint members to review panels. They prepare summary statements. And Grants Management Officers, as you can guess, they deal with budgets. They oversee them, and they ensure that grantees are compliant with NIH policies and regulations.

So when you do you talk to them? So for Program Officers, you're going to want to reach out to them well before your application is due. These are the individuals that you're going to want to talk to, because they understand what are the priority research areas, as well as funding parties for their institutes and centers, so you're definitely going to want to make sure that you reach out and communicate with them so that you can understand how your research fits into the priorities of that institute. Because you want to definitely make sure that your research baby finds its right home. So the Scientific Review Officer -- so after your application has been assigned to a review committee, you're going to want to contact your Scientific Review Officer. So this is the person that you talk to if you have to provide any missing information or supplementary information as well. Grants Management Officers -- you can contact them before or after the review so that you can discuss any issues with the budget, if you have a change of institution, if there is an issue with the start gates, etcetera.

So how do you find that right Program Officer? So first thing is that you can talk to your research mentors and your colleagues; they've probably been in research for a long time, so they probably have some really great suggestions of where to start. There's also the NIH RePORTER. Here you can find information on who are your competitors. What is that research out there that's been funded by NIH, which ICs are funding them, and according to which activity codes, so a fellowship, a career development award, a research project grant, so on and so forth. Next there's NIH MATCHMAKER. This is what I call the "plenty of fish" that matches research investigators with their perfect Program Officer. So if you type into the Search tool keywords, or, for example, your specific aims, you get a plethora of information that you can find useful. So for example, you can find which ICs are funding research in your particular area, what mechanisms or what activity codes are being used to fund it? What are the study sections that have been reviewing this information?

One thing that I want to get clear, or that I want to reiterate over and over again while we talk today is that normalize reaching out. No one can exist on their own. You don't exist in a vacuum, and you cannot conduct a research career just by doing it on your own. So make sure that you are normalizing reaching out to your social networks, whether they are your co-mentors, whether they are your peers, whether they are your Program Officers here at the NIH. So when you reach out to a Program Officer, always reach out, as I said before, well before your deadline. Send them some information about your research, what your research goals are. Who do you want to be in the research world? How do you see your research developing? They can utilize this information in order to assist you to find appropriate mechanisms that are suitable to helping you to navigate your research career.

So now let's talk about Funding Opportunity Announcements. What's an FOA? So for any application that you submit to NIH, you're going to apply through a Funding Opportunity Announcement, or an FOA. And this is simply a vehicle by which NIH and other federal grant agencies announce their funding opportunities. All federal agencies utilize FOAs. So FOAs can be program announcements, requests for applications, notices of funding availability, parent announcements, etcetera. And each of these outline the program goals, objectives, activity codes, etcetera. So for example, program announcements -- these are FOAs that identify specific program areas of science. They can have specific set-aside funds, they can have specific review dates. They're usually ongoing with regards to their receipt dates, they're standard, so you can control when you're going to apply, as opposed to a request for applications. These are special FOAs that identify or solicit research in very specific, pre-defined areas. There's a pre-determined amount of set-aside funds, as well as a number of awards that will be provided by the supporting ICs, and there's usually only one receipt date.

So this is a diagram, or a cartoon, if you want to say, of the NIH research training website. Here you can see tons of information about funding opportunities, etcetera, according to career stage, and we're going to get into that in just a little bit. So this diagram here, again, shows funding opportunities by career phase. So from undergrad to pre-doc to post-doc to early investigator stages, and then beyond. So we're going to take a brief tour of these activity codes, but before we get started on this funding roll call, I want to talk to you a little bit about the value of research and administrative supplements to help you to enhance your career progression.

So diversity supplements -- the goal of the diversity supplement are to assist in diversifying the biomedical research workforce by supporting promising investigators from diverse and underrepresented groups who seek to develop research capabilities and career development experiences that will assist them in advancing towards research independence. Diversity supplements can be utilized as a bridge towards an F or a K, but they can be utilized to support many different career stages from undergrad to faculty, and provide funding from $5,000 to $10,000 per year, based on the career stage, to support salary, limited research costs, etcetera. So if you have any questions about how to submit a diversity supplement application, eligibility, priority scientific areas of interest to NIH ICs, please consult the FOA that's outlined at the top of the slide. But also, check to see who your Program Officers are within the tab, or within the link for the IC-specific tables, reach out to these Program Officers, have a conversation about how to apply and what's important for your application.

So key administrative supplements -- so as you see here on the left, Research Continuity Supplements provides support to enhance retention and minimize departures of early career investigators from the research workforce due to the experience of critical life events, such as childbirth, illness, etcetera. The Mentor Case Supplement is intended to ensure continuity of research among recipients of Mentor K-Awards as they transition into research independence. And the second supplement is intended to enhance retention of investigators that are facing critical life events, who are transitioning either to the renewal of their first -- of their first to a second RPG, or to a second new NIH RPG. So most individuals that apply for and receive Research Continuity awards use these funds to support the services of additional personnel, such as technicians, statisticians, to obtain computational services, or to provide or purchase research supplies or equipment. And this is to help them to keep the research going while they're working through their life event that they're experiencing.

On the right, you have your Re-entry and Re-integration Supplements to support full or part-time research for researchers that are returning to the scientific workforce after a lengthy separation. So I do want to take a moment to highlight the Re-integration Supplement, which addresses the critical need of scientists who have been adversely affected by unsafe or discriminatory environments to rapidly enable them to transition into new research environments that are safe and supportive, so that they can continue their research progression. I also want to note that pre-doc and post-doc students are eligible for Re-integration Supplements.

Lastly is the Loan Repayment Program, which can be a real career-saver for many investigators. So a loan, that is recognized by many early career investigators as one of the biggest career impediments or barriers to starting and continuing their research progress. So in exchange for a two-year commitment to perform research in an NIH mission-critical research area, NIH can commit to repaying up to $50,000 in eligible student loan debt. Of course the amount that an individual will receive will be dependent on their loan debt level. Overall, the success rate for this program is around 50 percent; there are six different types of LRPs to choose from. And how do you find out more information about the LRPs? Of course you can check out the available resources on the LRP website, which are indicated here, www.lrp.nih.gov. And what else am I going to say? I'm going to say, reach out to your Program Officer. And then also, I'm going to say contact the Loan Repayment Program for more information.

So I'd like to point out a few family-friendly policies that you should be aware of. So the first is that the NRSAs allow for 60 days, or eight weeks of parental leave for fellows and trainees. And NIH also provides up to 50 percent -- I'm sorry, $2500 per year to help defray childcare costs. So I'm getting a message that there are audio issues. Megan, can you hear me?

Megan Columbus: Yes, I can hear you.

Erika Boone: Okay, great. I just wanted to make sure that we're not having audio issues. So NIH has also implemented a mechanism to report the experience of discrimination and other forms of harassment as well. The link can be found on the NIHGrants.nih.gov website. To be pretty transparent, when I was a graduate student, I had a child when I was in graduate school, so that childcare cost benefit would have definitely been of use to me when I was a graduate student. But then also, when I was a post-doc, unfortunately, I experienced sexual harassment. I had no one to report this to, and I didn't feel like I had someone that would be able to help me. So neither that childcare allowance nor the reporting core role that NIH has available were available, but I'm hoping that if you out there in the research world are in need of these services or these options, if you need to make a report, or if you need to take advantage of childcare costs, please, please, please look at the NIH website for additional information.

So now let's continue this. Let's talk more about funding opportunities. We have about 15 minutes more left of me talking, so let's get into this. So you all heard a lot about the NRSA Award, which provides training opportunities for individuals at various stages of education and training, beginning at the baccalaureate level via pre-doctoral fellowships and through the post-doctoral phase, via the post-doctoral fellowships and institutional training grants, as you can see listed here.

Each of the NRSAs have common features, including a provision of tuition and fees, stipends to help defray living costs, and institutional allowances for fellowships and training-related expenses for trainees. The T32s provide awards to institutions to support research training activities or graduate and/or post-doctoral trainees. Now here we're highlighting the institutional pre-doctoral T32, which enables promising pre-doctoral students to obtain individualized mentor research training from outstanding faculty while they're conducting their dissertation research. It allows for them to gain skills that they need to transition to the next stage of their research career. Individual fellowships including the F30, F31, the Diversity F31 and the F32 are outlined on the right. As an example, the pre-doc NRSA F31 provides up to give years of support to allow pre-doctoral students the opportunity to develop the technical, operational, professional and research skills that they need in order to conduct research and transition their careers in the biomedical research workforce. The F31 is also used to enhance workforce diversity through the F31 diversity fellowship award.

So though most newly-graduated doctoral level researchers would benefit from post-doctoral training and further career development. There are some early career investigators that are interested and ready to skip that post-doc and launch directly. I'm sorry, I'm talking too fast for the ASL interpreter, so I'm going to slow down for everyone. So I think I'm just so excited to be able to give all of you this information, and I'm speaking really, really fast. But let's get back to the DP5. So for individuals that do not need to partake of the post-doctoral period and they're ready to launch into their research careers, we have the NIH Director's Early Independence Award, which allows for exceptional investigators to pursue independent research careers directly after the completion of their research doctor degree, or their clinical residency. So in essence, it allows for individuals to bypass the traditional post- doctoral training experience and enter into an independent research career.

So for those individuals that are seeking to continue from pre-doc training into post-doctoral training, NIH supports a number of programs, including this transition F99/K00 award. So this is a transition award that allows for promising outstanding graduate students from diverse backgrounds to facilitate transition from graduate studies into post-doctoral positions. So of course, as I indicated, this is a two-phased award. So, in the first phase, it's one to two years, while the individual is completing their dissertation research. And then they can transition into K00, once they transition into their post-doctoral studies. To find out more information about the F99/K00, I think that you have access to these slides so you can access these links as well to find out more information.

All right, so for those individuals that are ready to move on from the graduate phase into additional mentor career development phases of their career, we have the career development awards. So there are common features of career development awards. They provide salary and research support versus for a sustained period of protected research time, usually between three to five years for intensive mentor research career development, under the guise of an experienced mentor, of course. So the expectation is that through the sustained period of research career development or training, that awardees are going to be in a position to launch into their independent research careers and be competitive for research project grant funding, such as the R01. Here on the screen you see some caveats related, or common features of the K-Award.

So now briefly, we will review the different types of K-Awards. You can see this here for yourself. Keep in mind, for the sake of time, I'm not going to be going in-depth for all of these. There are other sessions that are planned, and where we have pre-recorded sessions from previous years of the NIH Grants Conference that you can consult that go deeply into all of the elements that are required for submission of the K01. But very -- I mean for the K-Award, sorry. But for the K01, this particular mentored research award supports intensive supervised career development experience in biomedical or behavioral sciences leading to research independence. So the K01 is also utilized by NIH ICs to enhance workforce diversity, or for individuals who propose to train in a new research field. Of course the K01 is the most-often applied for career development award that NIH supports. The K08 provides for a protected time for individuals with clinical doctorate degrees. The K23 supports career development of investigators who made a commitment to patient-oriented research, and the K25 -- not listed here -- supports investigators whose quantitative science and engineering research has thus far not been focused primarily on questions that are related to health and disease.

So now let's talk a little bit about another transition award that NIH has, and it is the K99/R00 -- I'm pretty sure that you all have heard a lot about this K99/R00 transition award. And the goal of this award is to facilitate a timely transition from the mentor pre-doctoral phase to an independent research position with independent NIH research support. So, of course, as you know, the K99 is a phased award, with the first phase being one to two years of the mentor K99, or post-doctoral phase. And the second phase, the R00, beginning once the post-doc starts a faculty position. And this phase can be for up to three years. As noted on the slide, there are several different types, or flavors, if you will, of the K99/R00 that are available from NIH, and they target different investigator types of research areas. For example, there is the Physician Scientist K99, the Dual Degree Dentist Scientist K99/R00, and the Brain K99/R00 to promote diversity. There's also the MOSAIC.

And speaking of MOSAIC, because there remains a compelling need to develop additional strategies to promote transition to independent positions for scientists from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds, NIH has the MOSAIC K99/R00. So the MOSAIC framework establishes the formation of mutually-supportive scholar cohorts that are based on scientific areas that span from the K99 to the R00 award phases, and it provides the scholars with the opportunity to engage in career development activities, which are facilitated via professional societies that are located on the right side of the screen. And these scholars are able to take advantage of peer networks as they engage in career development activities, including team building, professional skills and networking opportunities, mentoring, career development, etcetera.

I want for you to keep in mind that there are timelines for new, as well as renewal K applications, so make sure that you are consulting the Grants.nih.gov website for more information. We also have small grant programs like the R03, which provides limited funding for pilot and feasibility studies, or the contact and feasibility studies that will put the investigator in line for applying and using that data to apply for larger grants. We have the R15 and the R16, which are focusing on supporting small-scale research projects that are conducted by faculty at mostly teaching institutions to help for them to improve or enhance their research capacity, but also provide student research opportunities.

We have the R21, which provides two-year funding to support new, exploratory research projects that can be used to develop pilot or feasibility studies as well, and the DP2, which is the Director's new Innovator Award, which supports highly-innovative, high-impact out-of-the-box ideas that may be a little bit too risky, or at too much of an early stage to be able to fare well under traditional peer review processes. One thing to note is that no detailed experimental plan or preliminary data are required for the DP2, so this is really important for early career investigators.

Next we have the MIRA, or the Maximizing Investigators Research Award. It's an R35, as well as the Katz ESI Award. Both of these are ESI, or Early-Stage Investigator-targeted awards. Two key elements of both of these awards is that preliminary data, again, is not required or expected. And this is a bonus for early career investigators, as it allows for them to be able to apply for and secure RPG funding earlier in their research careers. Also, while the proposed research can rely on prior work or foundational expertise of the investigator, it must represent a different direction within their research, and it can involve a new approach methodology, technology or paradigm. The benefit, as I was saying before, is that it increases opportunity and chance for new scientific discovery for these investigators, so please make sure that you're engaging in conversation with your Program Officer prior to your application, so that you can really understand how to target your application for both of these awards.

So now before I wrap up, we'll talk a little bit about the R01. And I think that everyone is familiar with the R01. This is the original and the oldest grant mechanism that is utilized by NIH. I do want to point out, as you see with the two boxes at the lower right of the slide, that NIH has recently published two R01s that promote workforce diversity, so please check out these two specific R01s.

So no I'm going to wrap up, give you some more interesting and useful information. I've used the term "Early-Stage Investigator" several times during this presentation, so why is this important? So ESIs, or Early-Stage Investigators, are investigators that are either within 10 years of receiving their terminal research degree, or completing their most recent clinical training, whichever date is later, and have not received substantial NIH independent research award as of yet. So why is this important? It's important because ESI status has its benefits. For example, NIH sets targets for funding for early career investigators, or Early-Stage Investigators, setting a higher R01 pay line, which, in essence, helps to prioritize applications with meritorious scores for funding. By doing so, we are trying to ensure more parity in success rates among early-stage and established investigators. Also during the peer review process, peer reviewers look more at potential than long-term track record of achievement. They are encouraged to weigh in early-stage investigators' academic and research background, and place less emphasis on preliminary data or the presence of preliminary data and extensive publication records, as compared to more established investigators. Lastly, here on the screen, as we point out, is ESI extensions.

So some investigators may have lapses in their research or their research training, or have experienced periods of less than full-time effort due to the experience of a critical life event. NIH will consider requests to extend ESI status period for reasons that can include medical concerns, disability, family care responsibilities, natural disasters, etcetera. So as I said, why is this important? Because ESI timeframe is that 10 years from either your receipt of your doctoral level degree, or your most recent clinical training. And as we said earlier within this slide, it grants you certain benefits. So being able to extend this benefit if a person encounters a critical life event that takes them out of their research and inhibits their research progress is very important. So principal investigators can submit a request for an ESI extension via the ESI Extension Request link that's found in the Education section of the PI's personal profile in ERA Commons.

We just have a couple more slides to go. I want to call attention to the CSR Early Reviewer, or ECR, program. I cannot tell you how beneficial experience within this program can be. I think that the most valuable part of this experience is that you are -- or early career investigators are working side-by-side with very accomplished researchers in their field. They're hearing what goes on when grants are reviewed. They're understanding where others go wrong, and where they can improve. They're being able to develop more critical thinking skills by participating in this process. So if you're interested in participating in the CSR Early Career Review program, check out the NIH CSR website.

Any time the NIH wants to communicate important policy issues, we do so via publication of notices. So some examples of notices are listed here. For example, there are notices regarding previous changes to biographical sketches, requirement for ORCID IDs, etcetera.

This is the Grants.nih.gov website. This is a central resource for information on grants, policy and more for NIH. Make sure that you visit the Grants and Funding webpage often. You can find important information about grants, about policy, about compliance, reporting, and find Funding Opportunity Announcements here.

You can also sign up to receive weekly emails, usually on Fridays, that contain new Funding Opportunity Announcements and notices published within the NIH guide.

Also sign up here to stay abreast of the latest news from the Office of Extramural Research, including the Open Mic Blog, and receive other important resources.

The final thing that I'd like to leave you with is that I want to quickly highlight the NIH UNITE initiative. So in 2020, UNITE was established to identify and address structural racism within the NIH and the greater NIH-supported scientific community. So with representation from across all of the 27 different institutes and centers at NIH, UNITE's aim is to establish an equitable and civil culture within the biomedical research enterprise, and reduce barriers to racial equity in the biomedical research workforce. UNITE has five different working groups, each acting as a think tank to promote equity and promote bold ideas and catalyze new actions. I am one of the co-chairs of the UNITE E Committee, and the charge of this committee is to identify and make recommendations to change policies, practices and cultures that contribute to a persistent lack of inclusiveness and diversity of funding equity within the biomedical research ecosystem, and then develop strategies to address them. The goal is to aid in our NIH in achieving meaningful diversity and inclusion of personnel and funding equity as a value and a conscious practice.

So based on the work of Committee E, within the next several months, there are going to be several new and revised policy changes, as well as funding opportunities that will be implemented and available to the extramural community.

Here's the slide for UNITE. This is summary advice about navigating NIH Programs. As I said before, review your IC priorities, learn about the NIH application and review process. You guys are in luck because you are participating in the Grants Conference. Make early contact with your Program Officers. Engage your social networks. Talk to people about their experiences, talk with your colleagues, because they're knowledgeable as well. If you have an opportunity to do so, study successful grant applications, and keep abreast of the latest in Funding Opportunity Announcements from NIH.

Megan Columbus: We have a bunch of questions that we would like to try and get to, if we can.

Erika Boone: We're done.

Megan Columbus: Yay! Okay. So keep your answers brief so that we can get through as many of these as we can, okay? I picked some that have been up voted. And so a general theme I captured, I think, in this question, which is, what is NIH doing to support the careers of researchers who had to take time away from research to be family caretaker? Are there resources to jump start their careers? If they are no longer a early career scholar, is there still a bump in a review score if you're a first-time submitter, and that kind of thing. Can you speak to the --

Erika Boone: Okay, so there were lots of questions in there. And within the slide deck, we had an answer to some of those questions. So I think that I've highlighted some of the family-friendly policies that we have here available at NIH. I also highlighted the Re-entry, Re-integration Supplements that we have available, as well as the Research Continuity Supplements for career development awardees, as well as F-recipients -- I'm sorry, not F, but individuals who are applying for their renewal RPG or for their second RPG. So those are some of the funding opportunities that individuals are eligible for to help them to be able to continue their research careers when they've had to take time away in order to deal with life.

Megan Columbus: Great. And so what about those people who have already -- they're no longer ESIs? Do they get any benefit to being a new investigator?

Erika Boone: Currently, we do have -- remember the R01, I had the slide on the R01 and we had the two diversity R01s that were indicated? The second one is really to promote workforce diversity to incorporate individuals like new investigators, individuals from diverse backgrounds, as well as those individuals that are considered to be new investigators. They have not been able to acquire independent or high levels of research funding, or independent research funding from the NIH. So this particular opportunity is something hat really does incorporate them in their needs. I really do feel like -- and this is just my opinion, so don't tell anybody I said so, we won't share this beyond the 100 people that we have on here -- that I think that we need to have more of a focus on new investigators. Because we have that gap in between early-stage investigators and then established investigators, and then what do we do in the middle?

Megan Columbus: Right. So that's shared between you and the 1700 people we have here.

Erika Boone: Yeah, don't tell anybody.

Megan Columbus: [LAUGHS] So any general advice for community colleges where research is not a priority, but where programmatic grants can bring important benefits to students?

Erika Boone: Yes.

Megan Columbus: How can they stage and motivate their faculty and leadership?

Erika Boone: Absolutely. So I did not attend community colleges, but when I was an undergrad, I did attend a very small, historically black college in Alabama called Talladega College, and my first supports were from -- it was called Minority Access to Research Careers, but now it's Maximizing Access to Research Careers. And the major funder of that was NIGMS. So I would encourage that individual to take a look at the capacity-building opportunities that are available on the NIGMS website. They have some that are specifically targeting at that community college level. So I would really highly suggest that they check out that website and then reach out to the Program Officers who are responsible for administering those programs within their IC.

Megan Columbus: Great.

Erika Boone: Oh, someone else says, she "did MARC too, great opportunity." It was.

Megan Columbus: What programs are allowing for non-U.S. citizens?

Erika Boone: The major program that we support that does not have a citizenship requirement is the K99/R00. That's the parent. Now there are other K99/R00s; I believe MOSAIC and the Blueprint. Maybe it's Blueprint that does have a citizenship requirement, so they would not be eligible for that. But the one flagship program that I am aware of is the K99/R00. If they check out the slide deck, there is information in there about the K99/R00, as well as the Funding Opportunity Announcement so that they can use that to gain more information about their program. Check out the list in the IC-specific tables, check out the Part E areas for the institutes and centers, and then find the Program Officers that are responsible for administering that program at the institution, and reach out to those individuals.

I do want to say that sometimes emails get deep, especially for me over the last two weeks. I've been underneath emails. So if someone does not respond to you, it's not because they think that your question is not worthy of being answered. Sometimes it just means that they didn't get to it. So don't worry, reach out to them again. We're here to help.

Megan Columbus: Yeah, no, that's very true. Also remember that, Erika, you were talking about research training career development awards, but foreign applicants can also apply, too, and R01s.

Erika Boone: Yes.

Megan Columbus: They're just looking at the Funding Opportunity Announcement and reading about the eligibility, right?

Erika Boone: And this is also where your networking -- your social networks come into play as well. So their mentors would be highly knowledgeable about their flexibilities with being able to provide support for these individuals. As a matter of fact, individuals who are not U.S. citizen but could be permanent resident are mostly supported on their mentor's R01s. So I'm sure that Program -- not Program Officers, but these PIs, Principal Investigators -- we have so many acronyms here -- if they reach out to their mentors or to their friend's mentors -- sometimes your friend's mentors and PIs can be a part of your social network as well, they can give more information.

Megan Columbus: We probably have time for another question, so I'm going to combine a couple of questions into one. People are interested in what they can be applying for at the same time, and how different kinds of grants can overlap. So can they apply for, like, a K01 and an R21 at the same time? Can they have support from different programs?

Erika Boone: There are instances where you can have a little overlap and decrease your time commitment with your K, if you have a K-Award. But again, check out the Funding Opportunity Announcement and talk with your Program Officer about these opportunities. Sometimes some of these things are institute-specific, and sometimes they're just NIH policy, what you can and cannot do. So I would make sure that you're checking in on a regular basis with your Program Officer. Sometimes it kind of helps to understand exactly what people's questions are when you know what their research areas are, and then other times you have to give a very general response. So this one was a very general response.

Megan Columbus: Sounds good. Well, and I want to tell people, thank you so much, Erika, for all of this. You're so great at this.

Erika Boone: And I'm so sorry I was speaking so fast. Like I said, I was so excited to give you all of this information. You're going to get everything!