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NIH Receives 20,000 Applications for Challenge Grants Through the Recovery Act *More Than 18,000 Scientists to be Involved in Peer Review Process*

Secretary of Health and Human Services Kathleen Sebelius announced today that the National Institutes of Health received approximately 20,000 applications for Challenge Grants, a new program under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This large number of applications is approximately equal to the total number of applications NIH receives in one of the agency's three major review rounds each year.

"President Obama is committed to supporting science and research that has the potential to improve public health and save lives," said Secretary Sebelius. "These grants and other Recovery Act investments will strengthen our scientific community and help our economy grow as we create new jobs invest in new laboratories, buildings and equipment."

"These are exciting times for biomedical research and NIH," added Acting NIH Director Raynard S. Kington, M.D., Ph.D. "We issued the Challenge Grant Request for Applications and received the largest response in our history from the scientific community, both in terms of applications and assistance with the peer review process. Through the Challenge Grants, NIH will invest in targeted research of the highest quality that will impact both economic growth and human health."

President Obama and Vice President Biden believe federally funded scientific research should play an important role in advancing science and technology in the classroom and in the lab.

The Challenge Grant program is designed to spur new areas of research and trigger an influx of research dollars into communities across the nation. NIH requested applications on topics in fifteen broad scientific areas the agency believes will benefit from a jumpstart or in which scientific challenges need to be overcome. They include bioethics, translational science, genomics, health disparities, enhancing clinical trials, behavioral change and prevention, and regenerative medicine.

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) will check the applications for compliance and review them in a two-phase process. Reviewers with expertise in the specialized topic areas were recruited to do the first phase reviews. Their reviews and the applications will be further assessed by one of about 30 study sections comprising researchers who will focus on overall significance and impact.

All Challenge Grant applications will receive a summary statement containing critiques with criterion scores from three assigned reviewers. More than 18,000 scientists are expected to be involved in the Challenge Grant peer review process.

CSR typically reviews 16,000 applications with the help of about 8,000 reviewers in each of the three main yearly review rounds. Including Challenge Grants and other ARRA grants, CSR will assess about 40,000 applications this round with about 28,000 reviewers.

The deadline for Challenge Grant applications was April 27. Scores and summary statements will be available in August 2009. Challenge Grant awards will be issued by September 30, 2009.

NIH expects to devote at least \$200 million in ARRA funding to Challenge Grants. In addition to the approximately 200 Challenge Grants that will be funded by the NIH Office of the Director, it is likely that more than 200 ARRA-related grants will be funded by NIH Institutes or Centers.

"Our scientists and their staff are unsung heroes, managing twice as many applications in a very compressed time with great professionalism and excellence," said CSR Director Dr. Toni Scarpa. "The response by the scientific community also has been tremendous. The help is particularly gratifying because it shows the value and respect that scientists have for NIH peer review."

The Center for Scientific Review organizes the peer review groups that evaluate the majority of grant applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health. CSR also receives all NIH and many Public Health Service grant applications — about 80,000 a year — and assigns them to the appropriate NIH Institutes and Centers and PHS agencies. CSR's primary mission is to see NIH applications receive fair, independent, expert, and timely reviews free from inappropriate influences. For more information, visit <http://www.csr.nih.gov>.

The Office of the Director, the central office at NIH, is responsible for setting policy for NIH, which includes 27 Institutes and Centers. This involves planning, managing, and coordinating the programs and activities of all NIH components. The Office of the Director also includes program offices which are responsible for stimulating specific areas of research throughout NIH. Additional information is available at <http://www.nih.gov/icd/od/>.

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) — *The Nation's Medical Research Agency* — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

The activities described in this release are being funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). More information about NIH's ARRA grant funding opportunities can be found at <http://grants.nih.gov/recovery/>. To track the progress of HHS activities funded through the ARRA, visit www.hhs.gov/recovery. To track all federal funds provided through the ARRA, visit www.recovery.gov.



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