REVIEW OF MODULAR RESEARCH GRANT APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is expanding its use of the Modular Grant Application and Award. In modular grant applications, total direct costs not exceeding $250,000 per year in any year, will be requested in $25,000 increments instead of being compiled from detailed and separate budget categories. Beginning with the June 1, 1999 receipt date, modular application, review, and award procedures will apply to all competing individual research project grants (R01), small grants (R03), and exploratory/developmental grants (R21). Unsolicited, investigator-initiated applications requesting more than $250,000 in any year will be required to follow the traditional application instructions and applicable NIH policies.

The modular grant initiative expands the existing streamlining and reinvention initiatives that are designed to concentrate the focus of investigators, their respective institutions, peer reviewers, and NIH staff on the science that NIH supports, rather than on the details of budgets. Through its simplified budget reporting features, the modular grant application also will help address the broader NIH goal of reducing the length of time between application receipt and grant award. These goals are consistent with the understanding of the research grant award as a grant-in-aid.

Modular grant application and award procedures have been extensively pilot tested during the past four years in more than 25 separate solicitations, covering a wide variety of award mechanisms issued by the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID). The procedures to be implemented are the result of input from numerous NIH staff members, NIH-supported investigators, grantee institution administrators, and members of peer review groups. Finally, NIH data indicate that almost 90 percent of competing individual research project grant (R01) applications request $250,000 or less in direct costs. On the basis of this experience, the size of the modules and the maximum of $250,000 were selected.

The first full year of implementation will be a period for comment. NIH welcomes comments on the experiences and concerns of investigators, reviewers, applicant organizations, and staff. Adjustments and refinements to the procedures will be made after the comment period. A formal assessment of the process will follow.

NO LONGER REQUIRED AND SHOULD NOT BE SUBMITTED

- Detailed budget for the initial budget period (corresponding to form page 4 of PHS 398) and budget for the entire proposed period of support (corresponding to form page 5 of PHS 398).

- Other Support pages of PHS 398.

REQUIRED CHANGES

- BUDGET JUSTIFICATION PAGE should include the following information (for samples see http://www.nih.gov/grants/funding/modular/modular.htm):

  o Total direct costs for the entire period of support should be at the top of the page.

  o Total direct costs requested for each year should be listed next. Routine escalation for future years is no longer permitted. Typically, the number of modules requested will remain constant through the entire budget period.

  o Personnel: the role of each key person should be described and the percent effort provided. Individual salary information should not be given.

  o Consortium and Contractual Costs should be provided with an estimate of Total Costs (Direct plus F&A) rounded to the nearest $1,000. For each key individual/organization

listed, the role and percent effort should be provided. Whether each collaborating Institution is foreign or domestic should be indicated. The total consortium/contractual costs should be included in the overall requested modular direct cost amount.

o Variation in the number of modules requested in different years should be described and justified, without providing additional budget information. For example, purchase of equipment in year 1 may result in a greater number of modules being requested in year 1 than in subsequent years.

NEW FEATURES

- Information on research projects relevant to the submitted application (ongoing or completed during the last three years) of the Principal Investigator and other key personnel is a new feature of modular grant applications and consists of a section added to each BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH. This information includes major goals and responsibilities for each project. It will provide reviewers information on the individual's relevant research experience. The page limit for the BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH has been increased from 2 to 3 pages to accommodate the extra information. For a sample BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH, see http://www.nih.gov/grants/funding/modular/modular.htm.

STILL REQUIRED

- All other components of the application are still required (for example, CHECKLIST, IRB and IACUC information or approvals, GENDER, MINORITY, AND CHILDREN SUBJECTS information).

REVIEWING MODULAR BUDGETS

As part of the modular application initiative, NIH has changed the focus of budget review from an examination of annual categorical budgets to an evaluation of the total resources needed to complete the project. Reviewers should consider the entire proposed research project and the total direct costs needed to complete the project in the recommended period. Based upon the reviewer's understanding of the research proposed and the costs and services associated with such research, the annual recommended budgets should be in modules of $25,000. In addition:

- Budget adjustments must be made in modules.

- If changes in staffing, percent effort, specific aims, consortium arrangements, etc. are recommended, but a cost in modules can not be estimated, recommendations should be described in the budget section without assigning an amount. Institute staff request the specific budget information at the time an award is being made.

- Reviewers need not address overlap issues. To address overlap, Other Support information will be requested by Institute staff from applicants being considered for awards.

REVIEWING NON-COMPLIANT GRANT APPLICATIONS

- If a non-modular budget (with incorrect face page and completed form pages 4 and 5 of the PHS 398) has been submitted, reviewers will disregard the details of the budget or excessive budget narrative, and will make budget recommendations in modules.

- If too little information has been included in the budget narrative, e.g., omission of percent effort of key personnel, the SRA will request this information from the applicant.

FOR APPLICATIONS SUBMITTED WITH NON-COMPLIANT BUDGETS THE FOLLOWING NOTE WILL BE APPENDED TO THE SUMMARY STATEMENT:

The submitted budget was not compliant with the new modular grant application procedures as announced in the <u>Dec. 15, 1998 NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts</u>. Information on the preparation and format of a modular budget is available at: http://www.nih.gov/grants/funding/modular/modular.htm

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