

RAS Checklist: NIH Director's Pioneer Award Program (DP1)

- ☐ Read the solicitation: [RFA-RM-25-001](#)
- ☐ Proposal must be submitted by grants.gov by 5 p.m. local time on **September 9, 2025**
- ☐ In all cases the SF 424 and instructions in the RFA takes precedence over these guidelines.
- ☐ PI must commit at least 51% effort to the activities supported by the Pioneer Award in the first three years of the project. Effort can be reduced to 33% and 25% in the fourth and fifth years, respectively.
- ☐ Individuals may submit only one application as a PD/PI in response to the FOA.
- ☐ A budget, bibliography, equipment, letters of support/collaboration are not included in the submission.
- ☐ Awards will be for \$700,000 direct cost/year for up to 5 years.
- ☐ F&A costs will be determined at the time of the award and should not be included in the budget request.

Required Components

SF424 (R&R)

- ☐ Field 4b Federal Identifier – [*in KC = Agency Routing Identifier*]: Designate two scientific areas, a primary and secondary, from the list in the Program Announcement. For each of the two science area designations enter the one-digit code followed by one space and then the corresponding abbreviation. Separate the two entries by a semicolon. The primary code is listed first. (Example: 1 BBS; 7 NS)
- ☐ Field 8 Type of Application – Must be “new”
- ☐ Field 12 Proposed Project – Enter Start Date is 09/01/2026; end date is 8/31/2031.
- ☐ Field 15a. Total Federal Funds Requested: Enter \$3.5M
Field 15b. Total Non-Federal Funds: Enter \$0.
Field 15c. Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds: Enter \$3.5M
Field 15d. Estimated Program Income: Enter \$0.
Note: The Budget Request is entered only in fields for "Total Federal Funds Requested" and "Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds" as described above. Funds may be requested for personnel (including collaborators), supplies, equipment, sub-contracts, data management and sharing costs, and other allowable costs. Only the five-year Direct Cost total of \$3.5 million should be entered in fields for "Total Federal Funds Requested" and "Total Federal & Non-Federal Funds." Applicable Facilities and Administrative costs (F&A) will be determined at the time of award and should not be included in the budget request. A detailed budget and other budget forms are not requested and will not be accepted.

Project/Performance Site Location(s)

- ☐ Complete and submit.

SF 424(R&R) Other Project Information Component

- ☐ Field 7: Project Summary/Abstract: summary of the proposed activity suitable for dissemination to the public. This section must be no longer than 30 lines of text

- ☐ Field 8: Project Narrative: Using no more than two or three sentences, describe the relevance of this research to public health.
- ☐ Field 9: Bibliography & References Cited: **DO NOT USE**. Not required, those considered essential may include in the essay and will count toward page limit
- ☐ Field 10. Facilities & Other Resources: Upload a brief statement (**1 page maximum**) of the facilities to be used for the conduct of the research.
- ☐ Field 11: Equipment: **DO NOT USE**.
- ☐ Field 12: Other Attachments: **DO NOT USE**.

SF 424(R&R) Senior/Key Person Profile Expanded Component

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed, with the following modifications:

- ☐ **Profile – PD/PI – Attach Biographical Sketch:** Attach PD/PI's biographical sketch, follow instructions on the SF424 (R&R) application guide.
- ☐ **Profile – PD/PI – Attach Current and Pending Support: Attach a list of Current and Pending Support from all sources, including current year direct costs and effort devoted to each project.**
- ☐ **Profile – Senior Key Person 1: DO NOT USE.** Submit information only for PD/PI. Information on collaborators or other key personnel is not required but may be included in the Essay.

No biographical sketches of potential collaborators or other key personnel are to be submitted and will not be accepted. Information on potential collaborators is not required but may be included in the Essay.

R&R or Modular Budget Component – Not applicable

A detailed budget is not requested and will not be accepted.

PHS 398 Research Plan

All instructions in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide must be followed, with the following additional instructions:

Research Plan Attachments

- ☐ Introduction to Application: **DO NOT USE**
- ☐ Specific Aims: **DO NOT USE**
- ☐ Research Strategy -- Upload Essay here. Submit an essay of **no more than 5 pages**. The essay should include the following sections within the 5-page limit, in the following order, with the headings shown. The pdf should be named "**Essay.pdf**."
 - **Scientific Area** - Project science areas: Provide 1-digit code and abbreviation for primary and secondary science areas at beginning of essay (same as referenced in the 'Agency Routing Identifier.')
 - **Project Title:**
 - **Project Description**
 - **Evidence of PD/PI's Innovativeness**
 - **How the planned research differs from the PD/PI's past or current work**
 - **Suitability for the Pioneer Award Program**
 - **Statement of research effort commitment:**
A statement must be included that, if chosen to receive an award, the PD/PI will

commit more than 6 person-months (at least 51%) of his/her research effort to the project supported by the Pioneer Award in the first three years of the award and at least 4 months (33%) research effort and at least 3 months (25%) in years four and five, respectively. Applicants with current research commitments of 6 person-months or more must provide a compelling explanation describing how their effort on existing grants will be adjusted to permit them to devote the required minimum effort to the Pioneer Award project.

Note: References are not required but if included must fit within the five-page limit. Figures and illustrations may be included but must also fit within the 5-page limit.

Letters of collaboration will not be accepted. Information on collaborators may be included in the Essay and their names and affiliations should be listed in the PHS Assignment Request Form.

- ☐ Progress Report Publication List: **DO NOT USE**
- ☐ Multiple PD/PI Leadership Plan: **DO NOT USE**. Not allowed; only single PD/PI applications accepted
- ☐ Consortium/Contractual Arrangements: **DO NOT USE**
- ☐ Letters of Support: **DO NOT USE**. Not allowed. Note: *Information on collaborators may be included in the Essay and their names and affiliations should be listed in the PHS Assignment Request Form.*
- ☐ Resource Sharing: Plans will be expected at JIT.
- ☐ All applicants planning research (funded or conducted in whole or in part by NIH) that results in the generation of scientific data are required to comply with the instructions for the Data Management and Sharing Plan. **All applications, regardless of the amount of direct costs requested for any one year, must address a Data Management and Sharing Plan.**
- ☐ Appendix: **DO NOT USE**

PHS Assignment Request Form

Since all applications received in response to this NOFO are assigned to a single Special Emphasis Panel and initially to the Office of the Director, do not suggest assignment to a specific study section or awarding component at NIH. **Since letters of collaboration and biosketches of collaborators are not allowed, provide the names and institutional affiliations of collaborators in the section for individuals who should not review the application.** Also, if you wish to request that certain individuals not review your application, list their names, institutional affiliations, and the reasons why they should not serve as reviewers.

Letters of Reference

Letters of reference are an important part of the Pioneer Award application. Applicants must arrange to have three (and only three) letters of reference submitted on their behalf. Applications that are missing letters of reference will be considered incomplete and will not be reviewed. Late letters will not be accepted. Letters must be submitted electronically – paper copies will not be accepted.

Applicants are responsible for monitoring the submission of their letters in the grant folder in the eRA Commons to ensure that three letters have been submitted prior to the submission deadline.

Letters must be submitted no later than 5:00 p.m. (local time of the referee) on the Application Due Date of the competition, September 9, 2025.

Notes and Helpful Links:

[NIH Pioneer Award FAQs](#)

Budget

A detailed budget will not be accepted as part of the application. NIH does provide the following as an FYI: funds may be requested for personnel (including co-investigators and collaborators), supplies, equipment, sub-contracts, and other allowable costs. Only the five-year total – \$3.5 million -- should be entered on Lines 15a and c. Applicable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs will be determined at the time of award and should not be included in the budget request. A detailed budget is not requested and will not be accepted.

HS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information

When involving NIH-defined human subjects research, clinical research, and/or clinical trials (and when applicable, clinical trials research experience) follow all instructions for the PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information form in the SF424 (R&R) Application Guide, with the following additional instructions:

If you answered “Yes” to the question “Are Human Subjects Involved?” on the R&R Other Project Information form, you must include at least one human subjects study record using the Study Record: PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information form or Delayed Onset Study record

Effort

Pioneer awardees are required to commit the major portion (more than 6 person-months or at least 51%) to activities supported by the Pioneer Award research project in the first three years of the project period. Effort expended toward teaching, administrative, or clinical duties should not be included in this calculation. Awardees will be allowed to reduce effort to at least 4 person-months (33%) and at least 3 person-months (25%) in the fourth and fifth years, respectively, to help them transition to other sources of support, since Pioneer Awards cannot be renewed.

Applicants with current research commitments equal to 6 person-months or more must adjust their effort on existing grants during the award to devote the required minimum effort to the Pioneer Award project. Applicants who will not be able to meet this requirement should not submit applications.