

Attachment 1: NIH Director's Pioneer Award (NDPA) Program, 2004 - 2005: Program Description and Requirements

A unique aspect of the NIH Roadmap for Medical Research is the NIH Director's Pioneer Award (NDPA) Program. The NDPA is designed to support individual scientists of exceptional creativity who propose pioneering approaches to major challenges in biomedical research. The term "pioneering" is used to describe highly innovative approaches that have the potential to produce an unusually high impact, and the term "award" is used to mean a grant for conducting research, rather than a reward for past achievements. Biomedical research is defined broadly as encompassing scientific investigations in the biological, behavioral, clinical, social, physical, chemical, computational, engineering, and mathematical sciences. The NDPA is meant to support individuals who intend to pursue new research directions that are not already supported by other mechanisms. The program is not intended simply to expand the funding of persons already well supported for a particular project.

The NIH's success depends on the creativity of investigator-initiated research, much of it supported by the R01 grant mechanism. Many scientists who participated in the development of the NIH Roadmap, however, expressed the view that additional means might be necessary to identify scientists with ideas that have the potential for high impact, but may be too novel, span too diverse a range of disciplines, or be at a stage too early to fare well in the traditional peer review process. A group of distinguished outside consultants proposed that NIH implement a completely new program to encourage highly innovative biomedical research with great potential to lead to significant advances in human health. This program would complement NIH's traditional, investigator-initiated grant programs. Unlike most NIH grant mechanisms, the NDPA is designed not to support projects but rather to support highly creative and pioneering people.

The research proposed in the NDPA application does not have to be in a conventional biomedical or behavioral discipline, but must be relevant to the mission of NIH. Awardees are required to commit at least 51% of their research effort to activities supported by the NDPA Award. There are no citizenship or residency requirements. NIH provides up to \$500,000 per year for five years in direct costs to a highly select group of individuals who have the potential to make extraordinary contributions to medical research.

For more details about the NDPA program, see <http://nihroadmap.nih.gov/pioneer/>