

TIGER TIPS

RESOURCES FOR AUBURN RESEARCHERS

A CHANGE IN NIH RESUBMISSION POLICY

(excerpted in its entirety from “Rock Talk,” Sally Rockety’s blog)

We have had much [discussion](#) on this blog about NIH’s resubmission policy (most often referred to as the NIH A2 policy). I have also heard from many of you in a variety of forums, expressing serious concerns about the impact of NIH’s resubmission policy on applicants during these times of tight funding. We’ve listened to your concerns, and we are making changes.

If you recall, following [extensive assessment of NIH’s peer review processes as part of the Enhancing Peer Review project](#), we implemented a number of policies to ensure that our peer review process was best serving scientific research. (If interested, the archived pages explaining this process are [online](#).) [In 2009](#), we went from allowing two resubmission applications to allowing one, and that policy specified that if the resubmission application was not funded, the application had to be substantially different in content and scope in order to be eligible for submission as a new application. The policy change was made to address the growing trend for resubmission applications to be scored more favorably, which in essence, created a queue for meritorious applications before success in funding. This queue meant that the time to award of meritorious applications lengthened considerably. The new policy had its intended effect: the number of applicants who were awarded with only one try rose substantially.

While the change in policy had the intended result of a greater number of applications being funded earlier, many researchers voiced concerns that the requirement for previously reviewed applications to be substantially redesigned in order to be accepted as new applications resulted in many meritorious research ideas being deemed ineligible for resubmission. With the ever lowering success rates due to the reduced NIH budget over the last couple years, even more meritorious applications were not funded. As a result, we heard increasing concerns from the community about the impact of the policy on new investigators because finding new research directions can be quite difficult during this phase of their career. Also, established investigators voiced concern about the need to redirect the research focus of productive labs in order to submit future NIH applications.

So today [we have announced a policy change](#). While the new policy still allows a single resubmission per application, ideas that were unsuccessfully submitted as a resubmission (A1) may now be presented in a new grant application (A0) without having to substantially redesign the content and scope of the project.

The resubmission of an idea as new means the application will be considered without an association to a previous submission; the applicant will not provide an introduction to spell out

how the application has changed or respond to previous reviews; and reviewers will be instructed to review it as a new idea even if they have seen it in prior cycles. While there may not be major changes to the research direction of these previously reviewed ideas, NIH expects that applicants will nevertheless take advantage of previous reviewers' comments to strengthen the applications for each submission.

The new policy does not address the fact that funding is still tight. (If only it could!) We will not be able to fund any more projects because of the new policy and likely will see some increase in the number of applications. However, we will monitor this new policy closely. Hopefully you'll agree that this policy provides you with greater ease and versatility, giving you the opportunity to present your best ideas in the best way, and enhances NIH's ability to discover and fund the most meritorious science in support of our mission.