

Writing K's that Review Well

OCTRI Research Forum

December 18th, 2025

C. Terri Hough, MD MSc

KL2 Director, OCTRI

Professor and Chair, Department of Medicine

Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, and Critical Care Medicine

Oregon Health & Science University

houghc@ohsu.edu



Outline



What is a K award?



The Key to the K is “Kareer”



Outline









Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (Parent K23 Independent Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

- Agency:** National Institutes of Health
- Agency Catalog:** [NIH2017 - Award Research](#)
- 03.001 - Child Diseases and Disorders Research
 - 03.006 - Discovery and Applied Research for Technological Innovations in Support of Human Health
 - 03.020 - Alcohol Health Research Centers
 - 03.026 - Blood Diseases and Disorders Research
 - 03.027 - Minority Health and Health Disparities Research
 - 03.037 - Diabetes, Digestion and Kidney Diseases Research
 - 03.038 - Research Program in the Neurosciences and Neurological Disorders
 - 03.051 - Cardiovascular Diseases Research
 - 03.070 - Alcohol Research Programs
 - 03.080 - Biomedical Research and Research Training
 - 03.084 - Allergy and Infectious Diseases Research
 - 03.090 - Aging Research
 - 03.091 - Minority Cancer and Health Disparities Research
 - 03.200 - Trans-NIH Research Support
 - 03.023 - Biomedical Health
 - 03.079 - Drug Abuse and Addiction Research Programs
 - 03.025 - Research Training in Complexities and Integrated Health
 - 03.021 - NIH Office of Research Infrastructure
 - 03.072 - Research Model of Diabetes and Cardiovascular Diseases
 - 03.085 - Child Health and Human Development Research
 - 03.090 - Lung Diseases Research
 - 03.040 - Translational and Implementation Science Research for Heart, Lung, Blood Diseases and Sleep Disorders
- See Updated Number: [K-2024](#) [View version history on Grants.gov](#)

Change My 1, 2027

Application process
This link is active in progress. Go to [www.grants.gov](#) to apply, track application status, and subscribe to updates.

[View on Grants.gov](#)

Award

S. Program Funding

S. Award Amount

S. Award Duration

Funding opportunity number: PA-24-394

Can award or existing opportunity: No

Funding instrument type: Grant

Opportunity Category: Discovery

Opportunity Category Explanation: --

Category of Funding Activity: Supporting the research process
Fund and conduct research

Category Explanation: --

History

Version: 2

Posted date: April 9, 2024

Archived date: June 6, 2027

Description [View all descriptions](#)

The purpose of the NIH Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (K23) is to support the career development of individuals with a clinical doctoral degree who have medical specialties, to focus their research activities on patient-oriented research.

Eligibility

Eligible applicants

- Government**
- Federal and Indian housing authorities
 - Federally recognized Native American tribal governments
 - City or municipal governments
 - Regional district governments
 - County governments
 - State governments

Miscellaneous

- Other

Education

- Independent scholar status
- Public and state institutions of higher education
- Private institutions of higher education

Business

- Small businesses
- For-profit organizations other than small businesses

Nonprofit

- Nonprofits with higher education with IRS/EO
- Nonprofits with higher education without IRS/EO
- Other Native American tribal organizations

Additional information

Other Eligible Applicants include the following: Alaska Native and Native Hawaiianerring Institutions, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (ANNAPHSI), Eligible Agencies of the Federal Government, Faith-based or Community-based Organizations, Hispanic-serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Indian Reservations, Tribal Governments (Other than Federally Recognized), Non-Profits from U.S. Entities (Foreign Organizations), Regional Organizations, Tribes, Chartered Colleges and Universities (CHCCUs), U.S. Territory or Possession, Non-American from U.S. Entity (Foreign Organization) are not eligible to apply. Non-American from U.S. Organizations are not eligible to apply. Foreign governments, as defined in the NIH Grants Policy Statement, are allowed.

Grantor contact information

Description

NIH Grants Information [grantsinfo@hhs.gov](#)

Email

See Section 03, Agency Contacts within the full opportunity announcement for all other inquiries.

Documents [Download all](#)

File name	Description	Last updated
PA-24-394-Full	PA-24-394-Full	Apr 9, 2024 03:43 PM UTC
Award Information	Award Information Table	



March 31, 2025

This funding opportunity was updated to align with agency priorities. Carefully reread the full funding opportunity and make any needed adjustments to your application prior to submission.

Department of Health and Human Services

Part 1. Overview Information

Participating Organization(s)

National Institutes of Health (NIH)

Components of Participating Organizations

NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (NIH)
 National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI)
 National Institute on Aging (NIA)
 National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)
 National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID)
 National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases (NIAMS)
 National Institute of Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (NIBIB)
 Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD)
 National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD)
 National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research (NIDCR)
 National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK)
 National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)
 National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)
 National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS)
 National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)
 National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (NINDS)
 National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)
 National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD)
 National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health (NCCIH)
 All applications to this funding opportunity announcement should fall within the mission of the Institutes/Centers. The following NIH Offices may co-fund applications assigned to those Institutes/Centers.
 Office of Research on Women's Health (ORWH)
 Office of Data Science Strategy (ODSS)
 National Eye Institute (NEI), April 15, 2024 - Participation added (NOT-EY-24-003)

Special Note: Not all NIH Institutes and Centers participate in Parent Announcements. Candidates should carefully note which ICs participate in this announcement and view their respective areas of research interest and requirements at the [Table of IC-Specific Information, Requirements and Staff Contacts](#) website. ICs that do not participate in this announcement will not consider applications for funding. Consultation with NIH staff before submitting an application is strongly encouraged.

Funding Opportunity Title

Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award (Parent K23 – Independent Clinical Trial Not Allowed)

Activity Code

K23 Mentored Patient-Oriented Research Career Development Award











Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Candidate Section

Research Plan Section

All instructions in the [How to Apply - Application Guide](#) must be followed, with the following additional instructions:

Research Strategy

- A sound research project that is consistent with the candidate's level of research development and objectives of their career development plan must be provided. The research description should demonstrate the quality of the candidate's research thus far and also the novelty, significance, creativity and approach, as well as the ability of the candidate to carry out the research.
- The application must also describe the relationship between the mentor's research and the candidate's proposed research plan.
- If more than one mentor is proposed, the respective areas of expertise and responsibility should be described.
- While the focus of the K23 award is on POR, complementary laboratory research directly related to patient-oriented research may be proposed in the application, thereby providing an opportunity for a career development experience in translational research.
- If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial, ancillary clinical trial or a clinical trial feasibility study as part of his or her research career development, describe the relationship of the proposed research project to the clinical trial.

Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research

- All applications must include a plan to fulfill NIH requirements for instruction in the Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR). See [How to Apply - Application Guide](#) for instructions.



Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Candidate Section

Research Plan Section

Mentor, Co-Mentor, Consultant, Collaborators Section

All instructions in the [How to Apply - Application Guide](#) must be followed, with the following additional instructions:

Plans and Statements of Mentor and Co-mentor(s)

- The candidate must name a primary mentor who, together with the candidate, is responsible for the planning, directing, monitoring, and executing the proposed program. The candidate may also nominate co-mentors as appropriate to the goals of the program.
 - The mentor should have sufficient independent research support to cover the costs of the proposed research project in excess of the allowable costs of this award.
 - Include a statement that the candidate will commit at least 9 person months (75% of full-time professional effort) to the career development program and related career development activities.
 - The application must include a statement from the mentor providing: 1) information on his/her research qualifications and previous experience as a research supervisor; 2) a plan that describes the nature of the supervision and mentoring that will occur during the proposed award period; 3) a plan for career progression for the candidate to move from the mentored stage of his/her career to independent research investigator status during the project period of the award; and 4) a plan for monitoring the candidate's research, publications, and progression towards independence.
 - Similar information must be provided by any co-mentor. If more than one co-mentor is proposed, the respective areas of expertise and responsibility of each should be described. Co-mentors should clearly describe how they will coordinate the mentoring of the candidate. If any co-mentor is not located at the sponsoring institution, a statement should be provided describing the mechanism(s) and frequency of communication with the candidate, including the frequency of face-to-face meetings.
 - The mentor must agree to provide annual evaluations of the candidate's progress as required in the annual progress report.
- If the candidate is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research career development, the mentor or co-mentor of the mentoring team must include a statement to document leadership of the clinical trial, and appropriate expertise to guide the applicant in any proposed clinical trials research experience.

Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors and Consultants

- Signed statements must be provided by all collaborators and/or consultants confirming their participation in the project and describing their specific roles. Unless also listed as senior/key personnel, collaborators and consultants do not need to provide their biographical sketches. However, information should be provided clearly documenting the appropriate expertise in the proposed areas of consulting/collaboration.
- Advisory committee members (if applicable): Signed statements must be provided by each member of the proposed advisory committee. These statements should confirm their participation, describe their specific roles, and document the expertise they will contribute. Unless also listed as senior/key personnel, these individuals do not need to provide their biographical sketches.



Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Candidate Section

Research Plan Section

Mentor, Co-Mentor, Consultant, Collaborators Section

Environmental and Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

All instructions in the [How to Apply - Application Guide](#) must be followed, with the following additional instructions:

Description of Institutional Environment

- The sponsoring institution must document a strong, well-established research and career development program related to the candidate's area of interest, including a high-quality research environment with key faculty members and other investigators capable of productive collaboration with the candidate.
- Describe how the institutional research environment is particularly suited for the development of the candidate's research career and the pursuit of the proposed research plan.
- Describe the resources and facilities that will be available to the candidate.

Institutional Commitment to the Candidate's Research Career Development

- The sponsoring institution must provide a statement of commitment to the candidate's development into a productive, independent investigator and to meeting the requirements of this award. It should be clear that the institutional commitment to the candidate is not contingent upon receipt of this career award.
- Provide assurances that the candidate will be able to devote the required effort to activities under this award. The remaining effort should be devoted to activities related to the development of the candidate's career as an independent scientist.
- Provide assurances that the candidate will have access to appropriate office and laboratory space, equipment, and other resources and facilities (including access to clinical and/or other research populations) to carry out the proposed research plan.
- Provide assurance that appropriate time and support will be available for any proposed mentor(s) and/or other staff consistent with the career development plan.
- Candidates who will be using resources associated with a Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) during the course of their career development award should include a letter of agreement from the CTSA PD/PI as part of their application.











Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Section V. Application Review Information

For this particular announcement, note the following: Reviewers should evaluate the candidate's potential for developing an independent research program that will make important contributions to the field, taking into consideration the years of research experience and the likely value of the proposed research career development as a vehicle for developing a successful, independent research program.

Overall Impact

Reviewers should provide their assessment of the likelihood that the proposed career development and research plan will enhance the candidate's potential for a productive, independent scientific research career in a health-related field, taking into consideration the criteria below in determining the overall impact score.

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

Candidate

Career Development Plan/Career Goals and Objectives

Research Plan

- Are the proposed research question, design, and methodology of significant scientific and technical merit? ited
- Is the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project rigorous?
- Has the candidate included plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of prior research that serves as the key support of the proposed project?
- Has the candidate presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?
- Has the candidate presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in vertebrate animals or human subjects?
- Is the research plan relevant to the candidate's research career objectives?
- Is the research plan appropriate to the candidate's stage of research development and as a vehicle for developing the research skills described in the career development plan?



Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Section V. Application Review Information

For this particular announcement, note the following: Reviewers should evaluate the candidate's potential for developing an independent research program that will make important contributions to the field, taking into consideration the years of research experience and the likely value of the proposed research career development as a vehicle for developing a successful, independent research program.

Overall Impact

Reviewers should provide their assessment of the likelihood that the proposed career development and research plan will enhance the candidate's potential for a productive, independent scientific research career in a health-related field, taking into consideration the criteria below in determining the overall impact score.

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

Candidate

Career Development Plan/Career Goals and Objectives

Research Plan

Mentor(s), Co-Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s)

- Are the qualifications of the mentor(s) in the area of the proposed research appropriate?
- Does the mentor(s) adequately address the candidate's potential and his/her strengths and areas needing improvement?
- Is there adequate description of the quality and extent of the mentor's proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate?
- Is the mentor's description of the elements of the research career development activities, including formal course work adequate?
- Is there evidence of the mentor's, consultant's, and/or collaborator's previous experience in fostering the development of independent investigators?
- Is there evidence of the mentor's current research productivity and peer-reviewed support?
- Is active/pending support for the proposed research project appropriate and adequate?
- Are there adequate plans for monitoring and evaluating the career development awardee's progress toward independence?
- If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research career development, is there evidence of the appropriate expertise, experience, and ability on the part of the mentor(s) to guide the applicant during participation in the clinical trial?



Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Section V. Application Review Information

For this particular announcement, note the following: Reviewers should evaluate the candidate's potential for developing an independent research program that will make important contributions to the field, taking into consideration the years of research experience and the likely value of the proposed research career development as a vehicle for developing a successful, independent research program.

Overall Impact

Reviewers should provide their assessment of the likelihood that the proposed career development and research plan will enhance the candidate's potential for a productive, independent scientific research career in a health-related field, taking into consideration the criteria below in determining the overall impact score.

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

Candidate

Career Development Plan/Career Goals and Objectives

Research Plan

Mentor(s), Co-Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s)

Environment & Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

- Is there clear commitment of the sponsoring institution to ensure that the required minimum of the candidate's effort will be devoted directly to the research described in the application, with the remaining percent effort being devoted to an appropriate balance of research, teaching, administrative, and clinical responsibilities?
- Is the institutional commitment to the career development of the candidate appropriately strong?
- Are the research facilities, resources and training opportunities, including faculty capable of productive collaboration with the candidate adequate and appropriate?
- Is the environment for the candidate's scientific and professional development of high quality?
- Is there assurance that the institution intends the candidate to be an integral part of its research program as an independent investigator?



Section II. Award Information

Other Award Budget Information

Section III. Eligibility Information

Section IV. Application and Submission Information

Section V. Application Review Information

For this particular announcement, note the following: Reviewers should evaluate the candidate's potential for developing an independent research program that will make important contributions to the field, taking into consideration the years of research experience and the likely value of the proposed research career development as a vehicle for developing a successful, independent research program.

Overall Impact

Reviewers should provide their assessment of the likelihood that the proposed career development and research plan will enhance the candidate's potential for a productive, independent scientific research career in a health-related field, taking into consideration the criteria below in determining the overall impact score.

Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the review criteria below in the determination of scientific merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

Candidate

Career Development Plan/Career Goals and Objectives

Research Plan

Mentor(s), Co-Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s)

Environment & Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

- Is there clear commitment of the sponsoring institution to ensure that the required minimum of the candidate's effort will be devoted directly to the research described in the application, with the remaining percent effort being devoted to an appropriate balance of research, teaching, administrative, and clinical responsibilities?
- Is the institutional commitment to the career development of the candidate appropriately strong?
- Are the research facilities, resources and training opportunities, including faculty capable of productive collaboration with the candidate adequate and appropriate?
- Is the environment for the candidate's scientific and professional development of high quality?
- Is there assurance that the institution intends the candidate to be an integral part of its research program as an independent investigator?

Additional Review Criteria

(e.g., protection for human subjects, resubmissions)



Scored components of a K award



Outline



The reviewer's mental checklist



The candidate: make them root for you!



Career Goals & Objectives



Career Development Plan



Career Development Plan



Research plan: right-sized and feasible



Research plan: what not to do



Mentorship team



Institutional commitment: the chair letter matters!

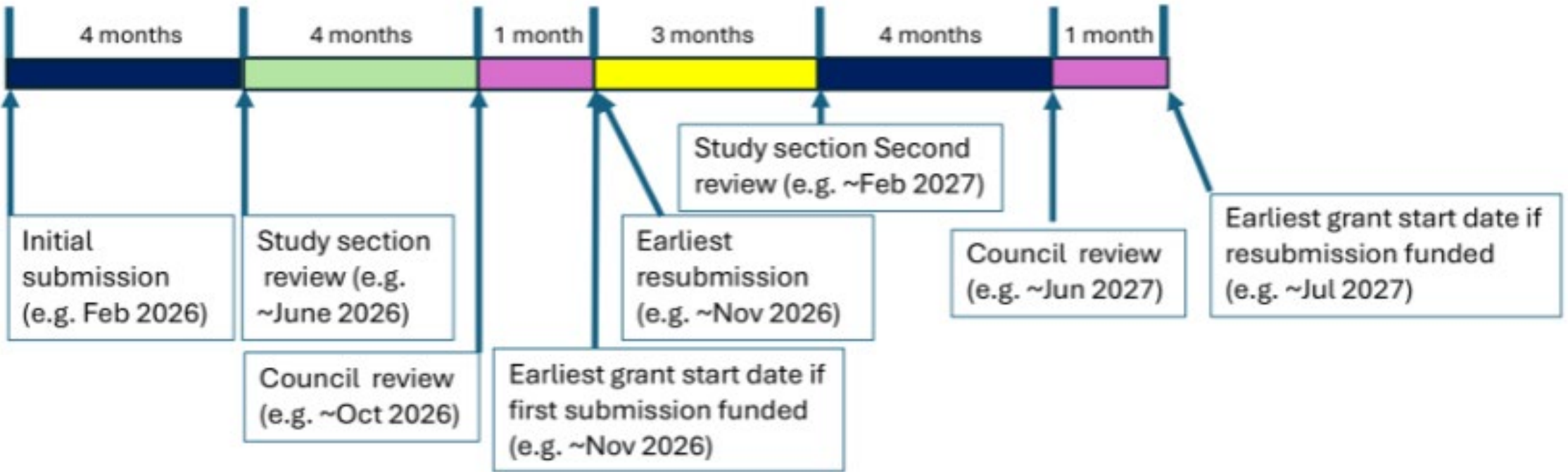


Timeline & planning



Time to earliest funding of an application requiring resubmission (17 months)

Time to earliest funding of initial application (9 months)



Resubmission is normal





Keys to success



Thank you!

houghc@ohsu.edu

