

VU & VUMC Limited Submission Opportunity

NIH Director's Early Independence Awards (DP5 Clinical Trial Optional)

Applications due May 16, 2024

VU and VUMC may each submit **two applications** to the [NIH Director's Early Independence Award](#).

The [NIH Director's Early Independence Award \(DP5 Clinical Trial Optional\)](#) supports **rigorous and promising junior investigators who wish to pursue independent research soon after completion of their terminal doctoral degree or post-graduate clinical training**, thereby forgoing the traditional post-doctoral training period and accelerating their entry into an independent research career. For the program to support the best possible researchers and research, applications are sought which reflect the full diversity of the research workforce.

Though most newly graduated doctoral-level researchers would benefit from post-doctoral training, a small number of capable junior investigators are ready to launch independent research careers. The Early Independence Award is intended for these select junior investigators, **who have already established a record of scientific innovation and research productivity and have demonstrated unusual scientific vision and maturity**. Typical post-doctoral training would unnecessarily delay their entry into independent research. The NIH Director's Early Independence Award also provides an opportunity for institutions to invigorate their research programs by bringing in fresh scientific perspectives of the awardees they host.

By the end of the award period, Early Independence Award investigators are expected to be competitive for continued funding of their research program through other NIH funding activities and for permanent research-oriented positions.

Eligibility

- Individuals from diverse backgrounds, including those from underrepresented groups and from the full spectrum of eligible institutions in all geographic locations, are strongly encouraged to apply.
- Applications in all topics relevant to the broad mission of NIH are welcome, including, but not limited to, topics in the behavioral, social, biomedical, applied, and formal sciences and topics that may involve basic, translational, or clinical research. The NIH Director's Early Independence Award is a component of the [High-Risk, High-Reward Research program](#) of the [NIH Common Fund](#).
- **Time window for eligibility:** The receipt date of the terminal doctoral degree or end of post-graduate clinical training of the PD/PI must be between May 1, 2023, and September 30, 2025. The degree receipt date is that which appears on the official transcript for the degree. The end of post-graduate clinical training includes residency and fellowship periods. The PD/PI must not have served as a post-doctoral fellow for more than 12 months following a previous, non-terminal doctoral degree (i.e., a post-doctoral fellowship served before May 1, 2023).
- At the time of application, the PD/PI must not have served as a post-doctoral fellow for more than 12 months following a previous, non-terminal doctoral degree (i.e., a post-doctoral fellowship served before May 1, 2023). To be consistent with the updated [NIH definition of Early Stage Investigators](#), eligible clinical training includes clinical residency and clinical fellowship.

- **Research independence at time of application:** Individuals are eligible only if they, at the time of application submission, do not have research independence. Lack of research independence is defined functionally rather than by position title. Eligible individuals must have *all* the following characteristics:
 - The PD/PI's current research agenda is set through concurrence with mentors.
 - The PD/PI's research is funded primarily through support to other investigators (mentored fellowships such as NIH F31 or F32 Fellowships or NSF Graduate Research Fellowships do not preclude eligibility).
 - The PD/PI does not have any space assigned directly by the institution for the conduct of their research.
 - The PD/PI, according to institutional policy, cannot apply for an NIH R01 grant without a special waiver or exemption from the institution.

There is no U.S. citizenship requirement for PDs/PIs.

Level of effort: Individuals must commit at least 9.6 person-months each year (i.e., 80% effort of a 12-month appointment) to the Early Independence Award project in years 1-2 of the project period. In years 3-5, awardees may reduce effort towards the Early Independence Award project but must commit at least 9.6 person-months each year (i.e., 80% effort of a 12-month appointment) to independent research in general. General independent research includes the effort spent on the Early Independence Award project and any other independent research projects the awardee is working on.

Budget Info: Awards will be for up to \$250,000 direct costs per year for a period of 5 years, plus applicable Facilities and Administrative (F&A) costs.

See the [RFA](#) for more information.

Internal Application Process:

Anyone interested in being considered to submit a proposal must submit the following materials **by 5 p.m. on May 16, 2024.**

****Note the different submission instructions for VU and VUMC postdocs, below.****

1. Brief (2-page maximum) research plan including summary budget;
 - a. Include three sections with the following headings to mirror the specific aims format: "Research Objectives," "Institutional Support," and "Early Independence Rationale."
2. Statement of support from department chair/center director;
 - a. The letter must address requirements for Institutional Resources & Career Development Commitment, specifically: allocated laboratory space, institutional financial commitment to investigator, and plans for mentoring and assuring scientific independence.
3. NIH Biosketch

For VU-employed Postdocs:

- Submit all application materials via [Infoready](#) by May 16, 2024 at the following link: <https://vanderbilt.infoready4.com/#competitionDetail/1936186>.
- Any questions about this opportunity, eligibility, or the LSO process may be directed to VU-LSO@Vanderbilt.edu.

For VUMC-employed Postdocs:

- Submit all application materials in a single PDF to LSO@vanderbilt.edu by May 16, 2024. Visit the [OOR site](#) for more detail.
- Any questions about this opportunity, eligibility, or the LSO process may be directed to LSO@vanderbilt.edu.