**Understanding NIH Grant Mechanisms:**

K01: Mentored Research Scientist Development Award

* Its goal is to provide protected time (3-5 years) for intensive research career development under the guidance of an experienced mentor, or sponsor, leading to research independence.
* The K01 covers salary and fringe benefits, training related expenses, and 8% overhead.
* The expectation is that the research conducted under a K01 award will launch independent research careers and make researchers competitive for R01 funding.
* When to Apply
  + Before submitting any NIH award proposal in which the candidate is listed as the PI.
  + When you can commit a minimum of 75% of full-time professional effort.
  + When you and your mentor have a career development plan with a timeline.

R21: Exploratory/Developmental Research Grants

* Its purpose is the investigation of novel scientific ideas/model systems, tools, or technologies with potential for significant impact on biomedical research
* Evaluated on the conceptual framework, level of innovation, and its potential to advance knowledge
* Justified through literature citations, data from other services; preliminary data may not be required
* R21 combined budget over the 2-year period usually may not exceed $275,000 direct costs
* When to Apply:
  + Novel, risky idea
  + To develop larger scale methods
  + Can help to have a more established collaborator

R01: Investigator-Initiated Research Grants Program

* Discrete, specified research project
* NIH R01 - most commonly used grant program
* Grants are generally awarded for 3 – 5 years; budgets of $500,000 or more (direct costs) in any year require sponsor approval
* When to apply:
  + Have some evidence of ability to manage external funds
  + Have evidence of publication productivity
  + Have sufficient support for science proposed
  + Have pilot data
  + Typically hypothesis-generating or hypothesis-testing

**Targeting an NIH Institute or Center:**

How to identify institutes or centers that align with your research idea

*Do your research.* Each NIH Institute or Centers (IC) has a distinct mission that focuses on a specific disease area, organ system, or stage of life. Look at FY strategic plan and research missions to determine if your project aligns with the IC’s priority areas. As you start looking for funding opportunities, ensure that the IC potentially interested in your area of science is listed as a participating organization on the funding opportunity announcement.

*Use* [NIH RePORTER](http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm) to explore what types of projects NIH is/has funded in your area of science and identify the appropriate IC by searching for the IC that is funding projects similar to yours. Specifically, the NIH Matchmaker tool in RePORTER will match you with an IC based on your research idea.

*Cultivate Relationships with Program Officers.* Make contact with different scientific program officials around NIH. POs will often review your aims, pitch, or summary to help determine whether the funding mechanism is a good fit.

**Identifying an NIH Study Section:**

NIH Review Process

(1) Scientific Review Officer: Reviews completeness of application and assigns reviewers.

(2) Study Section Peer Review: Provides written critique & numerical scores for review criterion.

(3) Council Review: Each Institute has an advisory council that makes final funding decisions.

Reviewing Bodies

*Integrated Review Groups (IRG).* Each IRG represents a cluster of study sections around a general scientific area. Applications generally are assigned first to an IRG, and then to a specific study section within that IRG. View the list of [Integrated Review Groups](http://public.csr.nih.gov/StudySections/IntegratedReviewGroups/Pages/default.aspx) on the NIH website.

*Study Sections.* Each IRG comprises multiple study sections. Study section members are appointed for multi-year terms of service and a number of temporary ad hoc members are typically assigned to each meeting. View [Study Section Rosters](http://public.csr.nih.gov/RosterAndMeetings/MeetingRosters/Pages/default.aspx) on the NIH website.

\*There is a new process for assigning study sections: NIH has created a new electronic form to help you better convey assignment requests and other information. Read more about the [new process](http://www.csr.nih.gov/CSRPRP/2016/05/new-form-helps-guide-the-assignment-and-review-of-your-application/#more-429) to streamline the assignment and review of your application.