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Dr. Lauer:

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) appreciates recent efforts by the National Institutes of Health to take the voice of stakeholders into account while developing funding policies to promote the sustainability of the biomedical research enterprise. NIH efforts to pursue these initiatives are aligned with our previous calls to enhance workforce diversity and ensure support of future leaders of the biomedical research enterprise (1). Given this support, we suggest a series of questions that we view as important considerations as the NIH develops the newly proposed Next Generation Researchers Initiative (NGRI).

Thus, the ASBMB requests answers to the following questions:

1. To pay for the NGRI, NIH has stated that it will rearrange priorities in other categories to free up \$210M initially, eventually reaching a steady state cost of \$1.1B. As this represents approximately 3% of the NIH budget, what are the priorities that will be “rearranged” and how will these decisions be made?
2. The special council review policy stated in [NOT-OD-12-140](#) (2) is now five years old. Will the implementation of [NOT-OD-12-140](#) change so as to free up additional funds? How many dollars of funding have been freed up through this mechanism over the last five years?
3. The NGRI proposes to fund all early stage investigator (ESI) grants in the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile, or those receiving a priority score of 35 or less if not percentiled. At some Institutes and Centers (ICs) this would double the current funding cutoffs. Could NIH provide data breaking down how many additional proposals are expected to be funded at each of the ICs?
4. NIH proposes to track the impact of the NGRI. What data will the NIH collect and what will be done with the data? Does NIH foresee limiting or expanding the NGRI in response to the data? What are the benchmarks to be used to measure success?
5. How does the NIH plan to encourage the development and testing of metrics? Will this effort be performed solely at NIH, or will NIH engage experts from the broader biomedical research community?
6. The announcement states that funds will be used for both early-stage and mid-career investigators. What is the expected percent of funds distributed to each category?
7. The mid-career extended payline is proposed to assist those within 10 years of receiving their first NIH R01. This is proposed to be done by “Extending the payline for those about

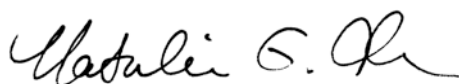
to lose all NIH funding.” Does this effort exclude those within the 10 year timespan who have already lost funding?

8. Mid-career investigators who have lost funding are not eligible for either the NI/ESI MIRA [PAR-17-190](#) (3) or the established investigator MIRA [PAR-17-094](#) (4). Are there plans within the NGRI to develop a funding mechanism, or adjust a current funding mechanism, such as the MIRA, to provide additional opportunities for these at-risk mid-career investigators?
9. Mid-career investigators attempting to land a 2<sup>nd</sup> R01 are in a significantly different position from NI/ESIs and from mid-career investigators who have lost, or are on the cusp of losing all funding. What is the motivation for including mid-career investigators attempting to land a 2<sup>nd</sup> R01 in the NGRI? Does NIH have data indicating that mid-career investigators attempting to land a 2<sup>nd</sup> R01 are at a significant disadvantage, suggesting that these investigators should be included in the NGRI?

We thank you for taking steps to ensure the long-term sustainability of the biomedical research enterprise. We appreciate – in advance – your consideration of our questions regarding the NGRI. The ASBMB supports the goals of the NGRI and welcomes the opportunity to discuss questions and concerns about implementation of the NGRI.

Please refer questions or comments to our public affairs director, Benjamin Corb, who can be reached via email at [bcorb@asbmb.org](mailto:bcorb@asbmb.org), or via telephone at 240.283.6625. We look forward to hearing your response and continuing the conversation on this critically important issue.

Very Respectfully,



Natalie Ahn  
President

#### References

- (1) Pickett, C.L. *et al. Proc Natl Acad Sci.* doi: 10.1073/pnas.1509901112 (2015).
- (2) <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-12-140.html>
- (3) <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-17-190.html>
- (4) <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-17-094.html>