The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has released new Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) for its “Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce” program (http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/overview.aspx).

This Common Fund program will establish a national Diversity Program Consortium comprised of three integrated initiatives: The National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN), Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD), and the Coordination and Evaluation Center (CEC). The long-term objective of the program is to enhance the diversity of biomedical research scientists who contribute to the NIH-funded workforce.

To achieve this goal, the Consortium, in partnership with NIH, will develop, implement, and evaluate novel and transformative approaches for biomedical research training and mentoring. Training models developed through the Consortium will engage individuals in biomedical research career paths, enhance their persistence at all career stages, and prepare them to thrive in the NIH-funded research workforce. Successful approaches are ultimately expected to supplant less effective practices nationwide, leading to a broad and sustained impact on the diversity of the NIH-funded workforce.

Highlights of the Diversity Program Consortium initiatives include:

The National Research Mentoring Network (NRMN)
NRMN will address the critical need for increased access to high quality research mentorship and networking opportunities for individuals from the undergraduate to early-career faculty levels. The network will develop an interconnected set of skilled mentors linked to mentees across the country both from BUILD institutions and elsewhere. NRMN will also develop best practices for mentoring, provide training opportunities for mentors, and provide professional opportunities for mentees. Read the NRMN Funding Opportunity Announcement here: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-13-017.html.

Budget: $2.225 million annually, contingent on the availability of funds
Number of Funded Awards: One
Application Due Date: March 18, 2014
Earliest Start Date: September 2014

The Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD)
BUILD awards will support novel, transformative, and broad-based approaches to training biomedical research students. Programs should emphasize research opportunities for students, along with additional innovative activities and mentoring, to engage and prepare participants for success in the NIH-funded workforce. Tangible advances are expected in three key areas: institutional development, faculty development, and student development. Applicant institutions (Primary Institutions) must be baccalaureate-granting colleges/universities receiving less than $7.5 million (total costs) in NIH research project grants (RPG) (average of three preceding fiscal years) and have an award-eligible pool of undergraduate students, at least 25% of whom are supported by Pell grants. Partnerships with research intensive universities, research institutions, and two year colleges are strongly encouraged to broaden the potential pool of participating students and maximize opportunities for research training and faculty and staff development. Details of partner eligibility are included in the FOA. The applicant (Primary) institution is responsible for oversight of the award and has the flexibility to determine the optimal configuration with its partners. Read the BUILD Funding Opportunity Announcement here: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-13-016.html.

Budget: Up to $3 million (total costs) in first year; not to exceed $5.3 million (total costs) for years 2-4
Number of Funded Awards: Up to ten, contingent on the number of meritorious applications received and the availability of funds
Application Due Date: March 18, 2014
Earliest Start Date: September 2014

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The Coordination and Evaluation Center (CEC)
The CEC will coordinate consortium-wide activities and evaluation of the BUILD and NRMN programs. It will facilitate the development of consortium-wide hallmarks, including core competencies, of successful biomedical research career progression and evaluate the impact of BUILD and NRMN on these hallmarks. The CEC will also serve as the focal point for dissemination, sharing consortium progress and lessons learned with the broader biomedical research training and mentoring communities. Read the CEC Funding Opportunity Announcement here: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-13-015.html.

Budget: Not to exceed $1.75 million annually, contingent on the availability of funds
Number of Funded Awards: One
Application Due Date: March 18, 2014
Earliest Start Date: September 2014

Visit the “Enhancing the Diversity of the NIH-Funded Workforce” website (http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/) for more information and resources for applicants, including Frequently Asked Questions about the program, an upcoming interactive forum for discussion about research training and mentoring topics, subscription to the program email list, and archived information about the BUILD and NRMN planning grants.

The NIH will host a technical assistance webinar for the Diversity Consortium initiatives in January 2014. This will provide an opportunity to clarify expectations for the FOA so applicant organizations can present their strongest case for support. Registration is required. Additional information will be posted on the Common Fund website at http://commonfund.nih.gov/diversity/.