



## Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

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### NIH Cover Letter Format Guidance

March 2014

We strongly suggest that you include a cover letter with your application, even if you don't need one. At a minimum, use a cover letter to specify the expertise needed to review your application and to request an institute and study section. NIH recommends that Principal Investigators (PIs) use a specific format for cover letters requesting assignment to an Institute or Center (IC) and/or a Scientific Review Group (SRG). Special formatting requested by NIH include the following:

- List one request per line.
- Place IC and SRG review requests (if applicable) on separate lines. If you do request assignments, frame your request in positive terms and use the following format:
  - List each request as a separate bullet.
  - List positive and negative requests as separate bullets.
  - Include the name of the institute and scientific review group followed by a dash and the acronym.
  - Explain each request in one to two sentences.
  - When you request a study section, explain the reason it would be a good match.
- Provide explanations for each request in a separate paragraph.

NIH Program officers are excellent sources of advice and information on whether your proposed research aligns with their objectives, priorities, and mission in addition to which SRG may be most appropriate. We recommend that prior to submitting a grant that you communicate with an appropriate program officer about your proposed project.

**Sample Cover Letter** – please note that not all areas may apply to your situation

The following template should be copied to department letterhead with your signature inserted at the bottom.

Date

National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
ENTER STREET ADDRESS  
CITY, STATE ZIPCODE

**RE: Application for the NIH Research Grant Program (MECHANISM NAME)**

To Whom It May Concern:

Under the NIH Grant Program (MECHANISM, PA-XX-XXX), I am (OR, we are) pleased to submit an application entitled (INSERT TITLE) for funding consideration and approval.

Our long-term goal is to define the major...INSERT LANGUAGE. The overall objective of this application is...INSERT LANGUAGE. As such, I (OR, we) feel that the (INSERT LANGUAGE TO CONNECT GOAL AND OBJECTIVES) would be an appropriate area for this proposed project. This project if awarded is in alignment with the mission of the (INSTITUTIONAL CENTER PLUS REASON/s).

Please consider assignment of this application to the following:

**Institutes/Centers (EXAMPLE)**

*Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development – NICHD  
National Institute on Aging – NIA

**Scientific Review Groups (EXAMPLE)**

Social Sciences and Population Studies Study Section – SSPS

Health, Behavior and Context Study Section – HBC

The reasons for this request are (PROVIDE JUSTIFICATION/NARRATIVE FOR ASSIGNMENT/S)

List of individuals (e.g., competitors) who should not review the application and why.

Disciplines involved, if multidisciplinary.

Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

First and Last Name

Title

Required information if applicable:

**(delete this box before printing)**

- Resubmissions
- For late applications include an explanation of the delay.
- When submitting a Change/Corrected Application after the submission date, explain the reason for the Change/Corrected Application.
- Approvals. Statement that you have attached any required agency approval documentation for the type of application submitted. This may include approval for application \$500,000 or more, approval for Conference Grant or Cooperative Agreement (R13 or U13), etc. (Approval documents should be appended to the Cover Letter and uploaded as one attachment.)
- GWAS. Genome-wide association studies or those that plan to access GWAS data in the NIH repository.
- Continuous submission. Indicate that you are a member of an NIH study section qualified to submit at a nonstandard time.
- Video. Indicate that you plan to send video files later.

Optional Information:

**(delete this box before printing)**

- Exclude reviewers. NIH policy allows you to list people who should not review your application, though your scientific review officer makes the call.
- List expertise needed to understand and review your application—even if you request a study section, this is a good idea.
  - Highlight disciplines involved, particularly if multidisciplinary, to help the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) assign your application and to ensure the appropriate expertise on the panel.
- Explanation of any sub award budget components that are not active for all periods of the proposed grant.
- Request assignment from CSR to a study section and institute.
- Note special areas. Note the involvement of human subjects, select agents, genome-wide association studies or study data, or other areas with special requirements.