



THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF
IMMUNOLOGISTS

**AAI Response to the NIH Request for Information: Sustaining the Biomedical Workforce
and a Potential Emeritus Award for Senior Researchers**

(<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-064.html>)

March 6, 2015

The American Association of Immunologists (AAI), the largest professional association of immunologists in the world, representing more than 7,600 basic and clinical immunologists, appreciates this opportunity to submit comments to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) “Request for Information (RFI): Sustaining the Biomedical Workforce and a Potential Emeritus Award for Senior Researchers” (<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-15-064.html>).

As the largest funder of biomedical research in the world, NIH should explore creative ways to sustain the biomedical workforce. This RFI seeks to pursue avenues to support the transition of senior investigators when they wish to move to other roles and recognizes that in this process there may be synergistic opportunities benefiting more junior colleagues that should be explored.

The RFI, which solicits comments on a proposed “Emeritus Award,” has already generated important debate about the prudent distribution of federal research dollars, and is encouraging investigators to suggest solutions to difficult problems that have emerged largely as a result of eroding budgets and an uncertain funding climate. AAI appreciates that NIH has reached out at this early stage to its many stakeholders in the research community, understanding that the creation of any new funding mechanism could be controversial.

With respect to the ideas raised in this RFI, AAI is not yet able to submit comments. NIH provided only thirty-one calendar days to comment, insufficient time for many organizations, including AAI, to receive member input or generate a thoughtful response on such a complex issue. Should NIH decide to pursue this idea, AAI would urge NIH to release another RFI that provides more detail on possible proposals arising from the initial RFI and other deliberations. We suggest that the next RFI address the relative roles and responsibilities of the NIH vis-à-vis the investigator’s institution and provide details of proposals under consideration, such as eligibility requirements for the proposed mechanism (e.g. senior investigators with multiple R01s or large projects, etc.), whether participants in this mechanism would relinquish future eligibility to submit NIH grant proposals as PI (or multi-PI or Co-Investigator), and potential budget approaches.