

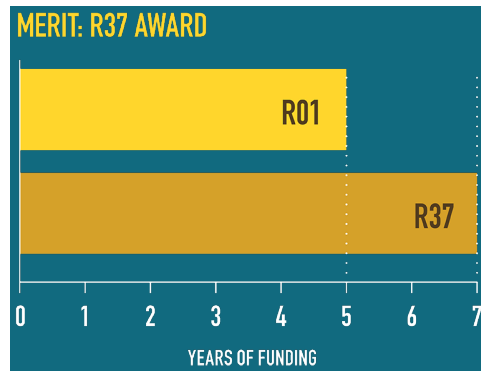
**NCI *Early-Stage Investigator (ESI)*  
*Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT)*  
R37 Award Extension Process**

# Today's Session – R37 Extension Process

- Moderator – Veronica Chollette
- Presenter – Amy Bartosch
- Discussion Topics
  - Overview of the R37 MERIT
  - Deadlines & Timelines
  - Submission Details
  - Available Resources

# NCI ESI MERIT Awards (R37) Overview

- NCI issued ESI MERIT Awards beginning FY18
  - **Longer-term grant** support for ESIs (up to 7 years)
  - Flexibility & opportunity for **creativity and innovation**
  - Additional time to **successfully launch careers** as early-stage faculty
  - **Enhance number of publications and productivity** before R01 renewal application and increased flexibility to stagger awards
- Percentiled ESI R01 applications that score within the standard payline are converted to R37 awards.
  - Eligible for 2-year extensions pending an expedited NCI review of accomplishments during the initial funding segment.



# ESI MERIT Award Extension Request Process

- Extension request deadlines and requirements will be indicated in the R37 Notice of Award (NoA).
  - *Please read the NoA!*
  - *Reminder emails from Office of Grants Administration (OGA) are sent to the PI and Authorized Organization Representative (AOR).*
- Requests must be submitted electronically in response to a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)
  - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-21-138.html>
  - *Any updated NOFOs will be linked from the original NOFO*

# ESI MERIT Award Extension Request Process

- All requests should be for a **2-year extension** of the award
- The total duration of the R37, both original and extension period, cannot exceed 7 years
- Questions can be directed to the Program Official (PO) or Grants Management Specialist (GMS)
  - Look in the eRA Commons for the most up to date assignments for both the PO and the GMS
  - Can't find an assignment? Send your question to [NCIGrantsPostAward@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NCIGrantsPostAward@mail.nih.gov) – they will get you to a current OGA contact!

# Request and Evaluation Deadlines Per NCAB Round

| Submission Cycle (start dates) | Due Date of R37 Extension Request (of 2 <sup>nd</sup> to last R37 year) | Due Date of PO Evaluation to the DOC director (of 2 <sup>nd</sup> to last R37 year) | NCAB Date (of 2 <sup>nd</sup> to last R37 year) |
|--------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Cycle 1 (Dec – Mar)            | July 1  | August 1  | September                                       |
| Cycle 2 (Apr – June)           | November 1  | December 1  | February  |
| Cycle 3 (July – Sept 30)       | March 1   | April 1   | June  |

## Example:

- A grant project period cycles April 1 (R37 ends March 31, 2028).
- The ESI MERIT Award extension request is due Nov 1, 2026.
- The request is reviewed by NCAB in Feb 2027.
- **Check with your PO and/or GMS if you have questions about your receipt date.**

# ESI MERIT Award Extension Timeline




- Extension request is submitted – November 1, 2026



- Extension request is approved – February 2027



- RPPR for Year 5 submitted – February 15, 2027



- NoA for Year 5 issued – on/about April 1, 2027



- Progress Report for submitted – February 1, 2028



- Extension (type 4) award is issued – on/about April 2028

# ESI MERIT Award Extension Request Components

Follow the Instructions in the SF424(R&R) Application Guide and the NOFO:

1. SF424(R&R) Cover
2. SF424(R&R) Project/Performance Site Locations
3. SF424(R&R) Other Project Information
  - Current IRB and/or IACUC approvals added as pdf attachments
4. SF424(R&R) Senior/Key Person Profile
5. R&R or Modular Budget
6. R&R Subaward Budget (if applicable)
7. PHS397 Cover Page Supplement
8. PHS 398 Research Plan
9. PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information



# PHS398 Research Plan – Additional Information

The following sections indicated below must be included in the extension request Research Plan:

- Specific Aims page from the parent grant application (1 page maximum).
- Research Strategy (6 pages maximum) including a Progress Report, research plan for the extension period, and an explanation of how the plan falls [within scope](#) of the parent grant and represents a logical extension of the original aims.
- A separate list to describe progress in the following areas since the original date of the ESI MERIT Award:
  - All grant-related publications (published and submitted);
  - Presentations at National and International meetings;
  - Resource and data sharing, if applicable.
- Vertebrate Animals, only provide an updated section if proposing changes to the use of vertebrate animals. If there are no proposed changes, include a statement to indicate that there are no changes.

# ESI MERIT Award Extension Budget – A Note

- Budget is limited to the committed Direct Cost of the 2<sup>nd</sup> to last year
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> to last year is the year the Extension Request is due
- If the Notice of Award has a Funding Policy Reduction, do not use the reduced Direct Costs as the limitation
  - Example:
    - Original committed amount - \$228,750
    - 2<sup>nd</sup> to Last Year Award with NCI Funding Policy Reduction - \$224,175
    - Extension request is limited to \$228,750 Direct Costs
- Please reach out to the assigned Grants Specialist and/or me with questions about the budget request – [amy.bartosch@nih.gov](mailto:amy.bartosch@nih.gov)

# ESI MERIT Award Extension Program Officer Review

- The PO will conduct a review of the extension request and develop a recommendation for National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB).
- The review criteria include:
  - Evaluation of whether the extension request is within scope of the parent award and continues to be in an area of scientific importance or promise to the NCI.
  - Timeliness and significance of the research.
  - Productivity of the applicant and progress made during the current award period.

# Digital Communication About the Process with PIs and POs

NCI webpage – <https://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/grants-funding/funding-opportunities/merit>)



Be sure to check the NCI MERIT Award Webpage before submission to ensure that the most current guidelines are being followed.



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## RESEARCH GRANTS

- Research Funding Opportunities
  - Outstanding Investigator Award +
  - NCI Research Specialist Award (RSO)
  - MERIT Award**
- Research Program Contacts
- Funding Strategy

### MERIT Award

The Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT)(R37) Award provides longer term grant support to Early Stage Investigators (ESIs)\* beginning with new, competing awards issued in FY 2018. Eligible investigators may obtain up to seven years of support in two segments: an initial five-year award and an opportunity for an extension of up to two additional years, based on an expedited NCI review of the accomplishments during the initial funding segment.

Investigators may not apply for an ESI MERIT award. ESIs who have submitted a single-Principal Investigator (PI) R01 application that received a score within the NCI pipeline are eligible for consideration. NCI program staff members will identify eligible candidate applications for the award and submit them to the National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB) for consideration. If recommended by NCAB and approved by NCI leadership, the ESI R01 will be converted to an ESI MERIT Award (R37) for the initial five-year funding segment.

The ESI MERIT Award extension application will be submitted to the NCI 18 months prior to the end of the initial five-year project period. The extension application will be reviewed by NCI staff and submitted to NCAB for review and recommendation. If an extension is granted, the ESI MERIT Awardee will be notified of the length of time of the extension and the approved budget. If a proposed award does not receive an extension, the awardee may submit an application for review as a regular competing research grant application.

By providing ESIs with this prospect for longer term support, NCI intends to give awardees the opportunity for greater flexibility, creativity, and innovation in their research, as well as additional time to become more established before having to submit renewal applications.

*\* An Early Stage Investigator is a program director /principal investigator (PD/PI) who has completed his or her terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.*

# Available Resources

- Your institution's Office of Sponsored Projects or equivalent
  - *Institutional resources will be invaluable – become familiar with them!*
- Grants Management Specialist & Program Official
  - *Check eRA Commons for most up to date assignments*
- NCI Grants Policies and Process website:  
<https://www.cancer.gov/grants-training/policies-process>
- NCI Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) Award for Early-Stage Investigators Guide Notice: [NOT-CA-18-037](#)

# Available Resources

- Method to Extend Research in Time (MERIT) Award Extension Request (Type 4 Clinical Trial Optional) NOFO:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-21-138.html>
- NIH Early-Stage Investigator Policies:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-stage/index.htm>
- NIH Grants Policy Statement:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/nihgps/index.htm>
- NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts:  
<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/index.htm>



*Thank you:  
NCI ESI Activities Committee*