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**In This Issue**



## Minibus Clears Congress, Signed by President: Agriculture, Justice, Commerce, HUD, Transportation, and NSF Have FY 2012 Budgets

On November 18 President Obama signed into law a FY 2012 appropriations bill that will provide funding for the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Justice, Housing and Urban Development, Transportation and the National Science Foundation (NSF). This followed congressional passage on November 17 after a House-Senate conference committee came to an agreement on the Minibus that included three of the twelve appropriations bills. The new law also includes a Continuing Resolution (CR) that lasts until December 16 to fund the rest of the government agencies and programs that were not in the Minibus.

The Minibus provided the **National Science Foundation (NSF)** with $7.033 billion, $173.2 million or a 2.5 percent increase above the FY 2011 enacted level. The President had asked for $7.767 billion for NSF in FY 2012. All the same, the increase in the appropriation from FY 2011 is significant because the conference committee allocated more funding for NSF than was either in the Senate-passed or the House Appropriations Committee-approved spending bill. Senate Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations Subcommittee Chairman Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and her House counterpart, Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA) reached bipartisan agreement that the NSF was worthy of escaping the budget cutting frenzy that has affected Washington this year.

The Research and Related Activities account, which funds the research directorates and a number of the NSF offices such as Polar Programs and International Science, received $5.719 billion, $155 million above the FY 2011 level. NSF leadership will decide how to allocate this amount among the directorates including the one for the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE). In addition, the conference report reiterated the language from the House report, pushed by Rep. Chaka Fattah (D-PA), Ranking Member of the House CJS Subcommittee, concerning the importance of interdisciplinary neuroscience and cognitive science research.

The Education and Human Resources (EHR) directorate received $829 million, a little over $32 million less than FY 2011. The conference report told NSF not to make any reductions to the Robert Noyce Scholarship Program and the Math and Science Partnership programs or to the series of programs involving Broadening Participation. The report also encouraged NSF "to find more effective mechanisms for disseminating the results of its education research to the K-12 STEM education community." The committee suggested this could include "partnerships with nonprofits and professional associations, Webinars, newsletters and workshops, drawing when possible on the resources of existing networks." They are particularly concerned that the National Research Council report, *Successful K-12 STEM Education: Identifying Effective Approaches in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics* receive wide distribution within the educational and scientific communities.

**Census and BEA Take Hits**

The Conference Committee provided the **Census Bureau** with a FY 2012 appropriation of $888.3 million, significantly below the $1.024 requested by the President. The Salaries and Expenses account received $253.3 million, $5.2 million below FY 2011. The Periodic Censuses and Programs account received $635 million, below the request of $752.7 million. The conferees also told the Bureau that it could use $55 million of the Census Working Capital Fund for programmatic purposes. Last year, Congress rescinded $50 million from this fund. According to Census Bureau budget documents, "the Working Capital Fund (WCF)is a non-appropriated account used to finance services within Census, which are more efficiently performed on a centralized basis. The WCF also includes reimbursable work Census performs for other Federal agencies, state and local governments, foreign governments, and the private sector."

This reduction in funding may have detrimental effects on the conduct of the 2012 Economic Census and the plans to fund research and other activities connected to the 2020 Census.

The Minibus appropriated $96 million for FY 2012 to the Economic and Statistics Administration (ESA), of which a little more than $92 million will fund the economic data programs of the Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA). The Administration had requested $112.9 million for ESA in FY 2012, which included significantly enhanced funds for BEA to improve a number of their data activities. The final FY 2012 appropriation for ESA represents a little over a million dollar decrease from FY

2011, as Congress continues to show little interest in improving the nation's economic statistics, an effort that has been going on since the early 1980s.

### Justice Research and Statistics Funding Helped by Set-aside

Funding for the **National Institute of Justice (NIJ)** and the **Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS)** for FY 2012 was reduced below the FY 2011 by Congress. NIJ was allocated $40 million, of which $5 million will transfer to the National Institute on Standards and Technology for DNA/Forensics work. The comparable FY 2011 figure was slightly less than $48 million. NIJ would get $3 million from the appropriation for the Office of Violence Against Women. It also received $4 million from the allocation for the Byrne Justice Assistance Grants for research on domestic radicalization.

The bill provided BJS with $45 million, of which $36 million is for the National Crime Victimization Survey, including $10 million to continue work on its redesign. In FY 2011, BJS received slightly less than $60 million. The conferees also directed BJS to spend $500,000 on crime data in Indian country. The bill allocated $1 million for the What Works Repository Evaluation Clearinghouse.

In addition to these direct appropriations, the bill permits up to three percent of grant and reimbursement program funds made available to the Office of Justice Programs, the home of NIJ and BJS, to be used for training and technical assistance; permits up to 2 percent of grant funds made available to that office to be used for criminal justice research, evaluation and statistics by NIJ and BJS; and directs that of such amounts transferred to NIJ and BJS, $1.3 million shall be transferred to the Bureau of Prisons.

The conference report also included language with regard to NIJ that indicates congressional expectations that the agency "carry out new initiatives proposed for fiscal year 2012 to the extent possible within the funds provided, including initiatives in the following areas: maximizing the value of forensic evidence; establishing the effectiveness of criminal justice diversion methods and strategies; eliminating rape kit backlogs (pilots); conducting Indian country crime and victimization research; improving prescription drug monitoring; improving inmate reentry; improving risk based decision-making in the criminal justice system; and establishing a better understanding of the risk-based factors leading to domestic radicalization and related acts of violence/terrorism, among others."

### HUD Policy and Research Loses Funding for Doctoral Research Grants and Post Doc Program

For the Department of Housing and Urban Development's **(HUD) Policy Development and Research and Technology** (the last word has been added by Congress), the conference agreement provided $46 million. The conferees also kept the Senate language that requires at least a 50 percent contribution from HUD's research partners. The bill did not contain funding for the doctoral research grant program or the young scholars post-doctoral program.

In addition, the Minibus allocated $50 million for the activities of HUD's Transformation Initiative (TI). Of the funds provided, the conferees recommended funding the following activities: biennial Notices of Funding Availabilities; continuation of the study on the impact of housing on young children; the disciplinary research team; continuation of the pre-purchase counseling study; continuation of the rent reform demonstration; independent Public Housing Administration (PHA) assessments, physical needs assessments, and technical assistance for troubled PHAs; the joint core skills certification proposal; Office of Native American Programs technical assistance; and the fair housing and equal opportunity assessment. Furthermore, at least $23 million shall be for OneCPD, a community planning and development technical assistance program.

### USDA Research Agencies Fare Relatively Well

The research and statistics programs at the Department of Agriculture (USDA) have come through the FY 2012 appropriations process in relatively good shape. An exception to this conclusion is the **Economic Research Service (ERS),** which received $77.7 million for FY 2012, $4 million less than

FY 2011 and well below the President's request of $86 million. ERS, which has not replaced former administrator Kitty Smith yet, was told by the conference report to continue the Organic Production and Market Data Initiative, despite the cut.

The **National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)** received $158.6 million, another example of the conference producing a higher number than the earlier House or Senate figure. It is $2.2 million above the FY 2011 enacted appropriation. The President requested $165.4 million for NASS in FY 2012. Congress also provided NASS $41.6 million to fund the Census of Agriculture in FY 2012. Anticipating funding reductions, on October 11, NASS announced it would eliminate 14 statistical reports. The conference report suggested this may have been a premature decision and directed the agency to reconsider its decision to eliminate or reduce the frequency of these reports and to reinstate as many reports as possible.

Within the **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA),** the **Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI),** the department's competitive grants program received $264.5 million to support investigator-initiated research with strong potential to contribute to breakthroughs in agricultural science, matching the FY 2011 enacted amount. The conferees expressed concern with AFRI research awards and told USDA "to fund only the highest priority agricultural research, as authorized by Congress."

Overall, NIFA received $705.6 million for payments to agricultural experiment stations, cooperative forestry and other research, for facilities, and for other expenses. This is a $6.9 million increase above FY 2011. Within NIFA's funding, the **Hatch Act** formula grant program was allocated $236.3 million, a significant increase above the President's requested amount of $204.0 million. Within the $705.6 million there is also $50.9 million for payments to eligible institutions, and $4.0 million for Special Research Grants.

The bill also allows $998 thousand for the **Regional Rural Development Centers (RRDCs)** program. This number matches the amount provided to the centers in FY 2011, but is a substantial decrease from their peak funding of $1.3 million. RRDCs are designed to link the research and educational outreach capacity of the nation's public universities with communities, local decision makers, entrepreneurs, families, and farmers and ranchers, to help address a wide range of development issues.

**Next Steps: Bleak Choices?**

With these three appropriations bills completed, Senate Majority Leader Sen. Harry Reid (D-NV) had hoped to move another three bills in a second minibus. That is probably not going to happen. This means that the remaining nine FY 2012 spending bills, including the two big ones - Defense and Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education - will wind up in an Omnibus Spending bill Congress hopes to clear by Christmas.

At the same time, it now appears that the Super Committee charged with presenting a plan for long-term deficit reduction will not reach an agreement. This will trigger across-the-board cuts in all spending starting in January 2013. Of course, that gives Congress a whole year to propose new remedies for dealing with this problem and we do have an election on November 6, 2012 that could further redefine how deal with this problem.

## NSF Announces CREATIV Initiative: Merit Review by Program Officers

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has announced a new initiative to support "bold interdisciplinary projects in all NSF-supported areas of science, engineering, and education research." The acronym experts have devised for the new program is CREATIV: Creative Research Awards for Transformative Interdisciplinary Ventures.

CREATIV will feature a pilot grant mechanism under the Integrated NSF Support Promoting Interdisciplinary Research and Education (INSPIRE) initiative, which was announced in the FY 2012 budget request. NSF will accept proposals for the CREATIV program between December 1, 2011, and June 15, 2012.

CREATIV's distinguishing characteristics are: *only internal merit review is required; proposals must be interdisciplinary and potentially transformative; requests may be up to $1,000,000 and up to five years duration. NSF expects to spend up to $24 million in FY 2012 for these awards.*

The CREATIV grant mechanism would support proposals on any NSF-supported topic. The award must have substantial co-funding from at least two intellectually distinctNSF divisions or programs. According to NSF, this means "that the project be interdisciplinary, in a manner that attracts support from multiple programs that extend beyond the scope of one field. The NSF organizational structure is not the primary determining factor, because some divisions cover multiple disciplines, and some disciplines are supported by more than one division." This is particularly true in the Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences (SBE) directorate, where geography and social psychology are in the same division, as are economics and sociology.

NSF strongly advises that principal investigators should discuss this issue with NSF staff early in the process, before committing significant effort to writing a proposal. This is important because before writing and submitting a CREATIV proposal, it is the principal investigator's responsibility to obtain written authorization to submit a CREATIV proposal by NSF program directors from at least two intellectually distinct divisions or programs. NSF also suggests that if two co-funding programs are from the same NSF division, it would be useful for the proposal to argue that the programs represent distinct disciplinary communities. NSF staff will judge whether a proposal meets the "intellectually distinct" criterion.

The proposal must integrate across multiple disciplines, as opposed to incorporating disciplinary contributions additively. It also must identify and justify how the project is interdisciplinary, for example by:

- Combining concepts/methods from multiple fields in new, surprising ways;
- Forming a new community from a union of communities that rarely interact;
- Proposing problem-driven research that requires a comprehensive and integrative approach to a grand challenge issue;
- Raising new fundamental questions or interesting new directions for research at the interface of disciplines; or
- Making major changes in understanding or use of existing concepts or methods to address complex phenomena.

Furthermore, the proposal must also demonstrate how the research is potentially transformative. This is done, according to NSF, by showing specifically how it fulfills at least one of the following characteristics:

- Challenges conventional wisdom;
- Leads to insights that enable new techniques or methodologies; or
- Redefines the boundaries among disciplines of science, engineering, or education.

Finally, the CREATIV proposal has to indicate its promise for societal benefit and how the project is better suited for CREATIV than for a regular NSF review process. For example, if the project is of such a high-risk nature that it could meet resistance from conventional reviewers, the researcher should explain and justify this assertion.

NSF expects to use multiple program directors from intellectually distinct programs to independently determine that the review criteria are met. Furthermore, an NSF-wide CREATIV management group must also agree that the recommending programs are committing substantial funds and are sufficiently distinct intellectually to make the proposal appropriate for the new program.

The Dear Colleague letter from NSF describing CREATIV is available at:

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2012/nsf12011/nsf12011.jsp?WT.mc_id=USNSF_25&WT.mc_ev=click.

In addition, NSF has produced a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) page for CREATIV at NSF 12-012.

## Lipinski Ensures Social Sciences' Inclusion in Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2011

On November 15, the Subcommittee on Technology and Innovation of the House Science, Space, and Technology (SST) Committee, marked up and reported to the full committee, the Natural Hazards Risk Reduction Act of 2011. The bill provides reauthorization for the national earthquake hazards reduction program and the national windstorm impact reduction program.

According to Subcommittee Chairman Rep. Ben Quayle (R-AZ), "Both programs are targeted federal research and development efforts to mitigate the loss of life and property due to wind and earthquake related hazards." Rep. Donna Edwards (D-MD), Ranking Subcommittee member, also noted: "The best way to minimize the loss of lives and property caused by natural disasters, as well as reduce disruptions to our economy, is to create communities that are disaster resilient."

Social scientists have conducted much of the research in community resiliency. Recently at an NSF-sponsored event on Capitol Hill, former COSSA President and University of South Carolina geographer Susan Cutter (see Update, September 12, 2011), discussed her work on this topic.

In order to ensure that social science research is considered part of the legislation Rep. Dan Lipinski (D-IL), a Ph.D. political scientist, offered an amendment at the markup, which was accepted on a voice vote. Lipinski argued that "the social sciences are essential" and that "the results of social science research are used in the development of outreach and implementation efforts and in mitigation, response, and recovery activities."

The bill now moves to the full SST Committee for consideration.

## DBASSE Holds Meeting on Teaching SBE Sciences in K-12 Education

In recent times, the role of the Social, Behavioral and Economic Sciences (SBE) in K-12 education has generated lots of discussion, reports that include and omit these sciences, and a concern that the "seamless integration of the sciences" articulated by NSF Director Subra Suresh at the COSSA 30th Anniversary meeting (see Update, November 10, 2011), does not extend to pre-college Science, Technology, Engineering and Math Education (STEM).

On November 17-18 the National Academies' Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education (DBASSE), directed by Robert Hauser, brought together about 85 people from the SBE community as well as folks from the other sciences and engineering to figure out what steps are necessary to advance the inclusionary goal for the SBE sciences in STEM pre-college education. Lorraine McDonnell, Political Scientist from the University of California, Santa Barbara and former President of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), and Christine Massey of the Institute of Cognitive Science at the University of Pennsylvania, co-facilitated the meeting.

After hearing from representatives of geography, psychology, economics, and sociology describe the efforts these disciplines have made in the K-12 curriculum, which mostly involved trying to get courses at the high school level, generating Advanced Placement exams, and attempting to convince State Education officials, who control curricula in K-12, that their subjects deserved more time in the school day, AERA Executive Director Felice Levine argued that the key is to integrate the SBE sciences into the teaching of science from pre-K through high school. She indicated that the SBE community in its sharp reaction to the exclusion of these sciences from the draft of the National Academies' Board on Science Education (BOSE), *A Framework for K-12 Science Education* (see Update, July 26, 2010), had developed ways to achieve that integration as well as providing a preliminary group of core standards for these disciplines.

One of the difficulties of trying to advocate for more inclusion of the SBE sciences in K-12 classrooms is the lack of knowledge of how much is actually occurring now. As Diane Massell of the University of Michigan pointed out, based on a paper she did with Carol Barnes, also of Michigan, the amount of state data is inadequate to draw many conclusions and that most of what passes for social science gets included in the social studies curriculum. From a limited data base of states, they suggested that most disciplinary attention within that curriculum is given to Political Science, but this is mostly civics and government; Economics, mostly how markets work and personal finance; and Geography.

The meeting heard how other disciplines - environmental education, engineering education, statistics, and earth science - had made their cases through long and systematic efforts to include them in the K-12 curriculum. These efforts included state level alliances with key actors and other partners, including business and industry. It also called for nimbleness and adaptation to possible roadblocks from the educational establishment. Another difficulty cited is the emphasis, exacerbated by the No Child Left Behind law, on basic skills and assessments.

In moving forward, the SBE community acknowledged that there are difficulties ahead. The BOSE document and the report from the President's Council of Advisers on Science and Technology that excluded the SBE sciences (see Update, September 27, 2010) as well as the continued influence of the *Rising Above the Gathering Storm* report, with its emphasis on the physical sciences and engineering, provide enough challenges. The domination of state K-12 education by the emphasis on social studies is another obstacle. Yet, representatives of the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health indicated that their agencies are interested in this topic. The big questions are: are the states interested and can support come from those interested in improving the nation's education system like the Gates Foundation?

Hauser concluded the meeting by noting that DBASSE is willing to continue to explore further steps in reinforcing Director Suresh's notion of seamless science even at the K-12 level.

## AAMC: Behavioral and Social Science Foundations for Future Physicians

"Many of the pressing health conundrums of contemporary society are particularly amendable to research inquiry based on the behavioral and social science model, ranging from seemingly intractable behavioral determinants of morbidity and mortality to patient safety and medical error reduction," notes the newly released Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC) report, *The Behavioral and Social Science Foundations for Future Physicians*. The report "argues the case for how the perspectives and findings that flow from the behavioral and social sciences serve to prepare medical school graduates for comprehensive, patient-centered practice and provide the conceptual framework needed to address complex societal problems that have direct bearing on health and health care disparities." It is a companion report to the *Scientific Foundations for Future Physicians*.

The report is the result of a panel, convened by the AAMC, of physicians, scientists, and educators with expertise in the behavior and social sciences from U.S. medical schools. The panel identified key competencies in these areas for medical school graduates and prepared the report to help medical educators decide what to teach from the behavioral and social sciences in their curricula and how best to teach it.

*Behavioral and Social Science Foundations for Future Physicians* emphasizes that "A complete medical education must include, alongside physical and biological science, the perspectives and findings that flow from the behavioral and social sciences." Accordingly, the report 'recommends explicit tools and strategies for the medical education community to use in developing meaningful student learning experience and comprehension of human behavior to improve patient care and the health of the public."

It cites the "prominent" examples of reduced tobacco use and diet modification as the "significant improvements in the health of the public" generated by behavioral and social science research and practice. It also recognizes that that "more and more disease states cannot be addressed without attention to the behavioral or social factors that cause them, erect barriers against treating them, or can ameliorate or even cure them."

Echoing Norman Anderson's talk at the COSSA 30th Anniversary meeting (see Update, November 10, 2011), the report also highlights the role of social and behavioral science in addressing health care challenges. It points to the fact that more than "50 percent of premature morbidity and mortality is caused by behavioral and social determinants of health: smoking, diet, exercise, and socio economic status." It is recognized in the report that "behavioral and social science knowledge and skills can support health and wellness, explain disease etiology, improve adherence rates to existing treatments, and develop new interventions." The report acknowledges the contributions of these sciences to basic and applied research, including: interactions of physiology and behavior; interventions informed by accurate knowledge of motivation; facilitating behavior change; understanding social forces influencing health behavior; policy interventions to promote healthful behaviors; health care system factors; and effective relationships with all health care providers.

Social and behavioral science contributions are "apparent in individual physician-patient relationships, as well as in complex systems of health care, social policies, and population health practices," the report notes. With regard to medical education, the report points out that these sciences are "also very important to understand the medical education process and professional context of medicine." Accordingly, the report presents a Behavioral and Social Science Matrix arraying applicable physician roles and behavioral and social science domains that can be used in the undergraduate medical education program to guide student learning.

*Behavioral and Social Science Foundations for Future Physicians* adopts the findings of two other reports it deems "credible and authoritative:" the Institute of Medicine's *Enhancing the Social and Behavioral Science Content of Medical School Curricula* (2004), and the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada's *The CanMEDS 2005 Physician Competency Framework*.

## IPCC Report on Managing Climate Change Adaptation Includes Human and Behavioral Factors

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has released a summary for policy makers of *its Special Report on Managing the Risks of Extreme Events and Disasters to Advance Climate Change Adaptation*. The report assesses the scientific literature on issues that range from the relationship between climate change and extreme weather and climate events ("climate extremes") to the implications of these events for society and sustainable development. It notes: "The assessment concerns the interaction of climatic, environmental, and human factors that can lead to impacts and disasters, options for managing the risks posed by impacts and disasters, and the important role that non-climatic factors play in determining impacts."

The report is full of references to human activity and its role in creating climate change, human impacts of possible climate change disasters, and human needs for recovery and adaptation. The IPCC declares that: "Climate extremes, exposure, and vulnerability are influenced by a wide range of factors, including anthropogenic climate change, natural climate variability, and socioeconomic development. Disaster risk management and adaptation to climate change focus on reducing exposure and vulnerability and increasing resilience to the potential adverse impacts of climate extremes, even though risks cannot fully be eliminated."

Under a section called Human Impacts and Disaster Losses, the report suggests a number of probable effects. First, changes in climate "have the potential to seriously affect water management systems." Second, there will be socioeconomic differences in future economic losses projected from climate change, but the IPCC indicates that more research is necessary to examine this phenomenon further. Third, the group is confident that tropical cyclones will increase and this will result in higher direct economic losses. Finally, climate change will likely "influence population mobility and relocation" with important effects on both host and origin communities"

The report also examines various scenarios across geographic regions. In looking at the probability of increasing heat waves in urban Europe, it notes that "factors affecting exposure and vulnerability include age; preexisting health status; level of outdoor activity; socioeconomic factors including poverty and social isolation; access to and use of cooling; physiological and behavioral adaptation of the population; and urban infrastructure." While risk management and adaptation strategies include public information on what to do during heat waves, including behavioral advice and the use of social care networks to reach vulnerable groups.

In any strategy for risk management, the report points out, that "a portfolio of actions to reduce and transfer risk and to respond to events and disasters, as opposed to a singular focus on any one action or type of action," produces a more effective response. Yet, the report suggests that creating international finance synergies to fund those responses has not been fully realized.

The full report is available at: http://www.ipcc-wg2.gov/SREX/images/uploads/SREX-SPM_Approved-HiRes_opt.pdf.

## Conservation Options for Farm Policy Explored at Forum

On November 9, the Farm Foundation held a forum titled **"Conservation Options for Future Farm Policy." Speaking were** James Andrews, Iowa farmer; David DeGennaro, Environmental Working Group; Bruce Knight, Strategic Conservation Solutions; Ronnie Lee, Georgia farmer; and Patrick O'Toole, Wyoming rancher.

Andrews began the forum by pointing out that farmers with limited incomes can still work towards conservation if they understand that it will increase productivity. He noted that the problem of absentee landlords and aggressive hired managers, which leads to abuse of resources, is actually down due to peer pressure. The majority of farmers are attempting to do the right thing these days, according to Andrews. He noted that dealing with government bureaucracy and repetitive forms can often make it difficult even for farmers who are trying to comply with conservation requirements; this bureaucracy has only gotten more difficult since the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has been forced to reduce staffing. Andrews closed by noting that incentives work very well to encourage most farmers towards conservation, but there are some people that only respond to fines and other punishments. The government should create policies accordingly, he suggested.

DeGennaro called for conservation as a top priority. He also noted that with 25 different conservation programs, there is room for reducing costs by increasing efficiency. DeGennaro also voiced a concern many in the broad agriculture community have held in recent weeks: the so called "secret Farm Bill" currently being worked on by the House and Senate Agriculture Committees in an attempt to submit it to the Super Committee before its January deadline. He called this inappropriate and declared that the Farm Bill must be created though a transparent process with ample input from stakeholders.

O'Toole focused his attention on the loss of young farmers- a trend that has been dramatic and is clearly unsustainable. We need to send a clear message, according to O'Toole, to farmers through legislation or otherwise that we expect ample food to be produced, but we expect it done in a sustainable manner.

For more on this forum and the Farm Foundation, please visit their website here.

## Implications of the Economic Downturn for Health, Wealth, and Work at Older Ages - Applications Wanted

The recent financial crisis emphasizes that there is much to learn, and scientific research is needed to address many of the questions, concerns and implications that have arisen. Accordingly, the National Institute of Aging (NIA) is seeking grant proposals on the implications of exogenous shocks, such as those produced by the recent economic downturn, for health, economic circumstances, and planning throughout the life-cycle.

According to NIA, this downturn has drawn attention to possible long-term effects of a global economic shock (rapid and unanticipated loss of employment as well as housing and financial wealth) on individuals' perceptions, planning behavior, and outcomes with respect to their health, well-being, and retirement decisions. The announcement recognizes that the implications of the global financial crisis are not confined to the United States. The changing demographic composition of the global populations, however, means that effects and solutions are likely to differ across countries. The Institute has released a funding opportunity announcement, ***Implications of the Economic Downturn for Health, Wealth, and Work at Older Ages (PA-12-009)***. Specific areas of research interest include:

- **Savings** - how savings patterns may have changed, particularly with respect to intertemporal tradeoffs between overall savings and retirement savings.

- **Consumption** - changing consumption patterns and the implications for later life well-being.

- **Wealth** - the changing patterns of assets allocation and portfolio composition and their effect on other decisions and on the impact of the downturn on homeownership rates and trends in house wealth consumption (e.g., reverse mortgages, Medicaid spend-down).

- **Labor Force Participation** - the changing patterns of retirement and labor force participation behavior, job loss and job search, and their effects.

- **Health, Cognition, and Decision-making** - the role of the financial crisis in shaping beliefs, influencing decisions, and affecting health and well-being.

- **Care giving Arrangements** - how aspects of the financial crisis (e.g., layoffs, foreclosures) have influenced the tradeoffs between labor force participation and care giving.

- **Intergenerational Transfers and Households** - the impact of the economic downturn on intergenerational living arrangements, resource allocation, and their interaction with public programs.

· **Risk, Insurance, and Risk Management Research** - the role of changing attitudes towards risk and its effects on insurance and the costs of uncertainty (e.g., precautionary savings, changing spending patterns, etc.).

· **Public Finance Implications** - the future implications of public sector underfunding and proposals to address it and the feasibility of, and sensitivity to, assumptions used in public finance forecasting models; research that models linkages across a variety of social programs and seeks to address the causal effect of changes to, or demand for, such programs as a result of the financial crisis (e.g., the interaction between disability applications, unemployment benefits, and social security eligibility.)

· **The Effects of Recent Policy Changes** - policy simulations that explore the life-cycle effects of recent legislation, consider whether there are disproportionate effects across varying demographic or industry groups, examine the importance and sensitivity of various assumptions, or seek to identify unintended behavioral consequences.

· **International Comparisons** - projects that approach the various research objections of the funding opportunity announcement incorporating cross-national comparisons.

**Applications may be submitted beginning January 5, 2012**. To apply or for more information see the announcement at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-12-009.html.

## NIH Director's Early Independence Awards

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is currently seeking applications for the NIH Director's Early Independence Awards (RFA-RM-11-007**)**. The Awards are designed for junior investigators wishing to "skip the post-doc" and immediately begin independent research. All areas of research relevant to the NIH mission are welcome. Budgets may be up to $250,000 in direct costs per year up to five years. Eligible candidates must be within one year of receipt of a terminal degree or completion of clinical residency.

**The deadline for applying is January 30, 2012. Letters of Intent are due by not required by December 30, 2011**. For more information or to apply, see the announcement at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-RM-11-007.html.

## NIDDK Mentored Research Scientist Development Award

The National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK) Mentored Scientist Development Award (K01) (PAR-12-020) is designed to provide support and protected time (three, four, or five years) for an intensive, supervised career development experience in the biomedical, behavioral, or clinical sciences leading to research independence. The NIH Research Career Development program is designed to help ensure that a diverse pool of highly trained scientists is available in appropriate scientific disciplines to address the Nation's biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research needs.

NIDDK is seeking applications from advanced postdoctoral and/or recently appointed junior faculty (usually with a Ph.D.) in biomedical or behavioral sciences who are pursuing careers in research areas supported by the Institute. NIDDK will contribute $90,000 per year toward the salary of the recipient. The total salary requested, however, must be based on a full-time faculty or staff appointment. NIDDK will also contribute $25,000 per year toward the research development costs of the recipient. Indirect costs are reimbursed at eight percent of modified total direct costs.

For more information or to apply see the announcement at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-12-020.html .

## Behavioral Interventions to Address Multiple Chronic Health Conditions in Primary Care

Recognizing that primary care providers (PCPs) face the ongoing challenge of engaging patients in decisions and behaviors that influence their daily well-being and long-term health outcomes, the National Institutes of Health Office of Behavioral and Social Science Research (OBSSR) along with the Institutes: Cancer (NCI); Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI); Aging (NIA); Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA); Drug Abuse (NIDA); Mental Health (NIMH); Nursing (NINR); are seeking research applications that propose to use a common conceptual model to develop behavioral interventions to modify health behaviors and improve health outcomes in patients with comorbid chronic diseases and health conditions.

The funding opportunity announcement (FOA), *Behavioral Interventions to Address Multiple Chronic Health Conditions in Primary Care* (PA-12-024), will support research in primary care that uses a multi-disease care management approach to behavioral interventions with high potential impact to improve patient-level health outcomes for individuals with three or more chronic health conditions. The need for this research was identified by a workshop organized by the Trans-NIH Integrated Health Strategies Working Groups designed to identify research priorities and gaps. The meeting highlighted the need for research on more effective methods for conceptualizing, triaging, and assessing health behaviors (e.g., adherence, mental health problems/disorders, diet and exercise, alcohol and substance abuse/dependence disorders and pain) in patients with multiple chronic health conditions.)

Applications are encouraged to include the following:

- Interventions should be practical and have potential, if successful, for implementation in primary care (e.g., in terms of cost of training, staff, office space and patient burden);
- Test a behavioral intervention in a primary care setting that targets health behaviors in three or more related chronic diseases or health conditions;
- The most rigorous design and methodology possible, given the populations and settings in which the study is taking place. In some cases, randomization (by patient, clinic, or community) is possible and feasible; in others, randomization may not be possible, and other rigorous, but non-randomized designs (e.g., quasi-experimental) that are both internally and externally valid, may be necessary;
- Describe and justify the components of the intervention to be used;
- Researchers will elicit input from key stakeholders, including providers and consumers, to maximize implementation feasibility and sustainability potential;
- Specify eligibility criteria for the patients to be enrolled in the study;
- Specify the primary outcomes and how they will be measured;
- Assessment of health outcomes (e.g., blood pressure, cholesterol levels, BMI, viral load in HIV, or HbA1c) that should be affected by behavior changes;
- The design may include care management decision support tools to optimize medication management and disease care management activities;
- Applicants are encouraged to include measurement of the intervention characteristics and contextual factors that affect implementation (e.g., necessary personnel, training, feasibility, staff and/or leadership acceptance) and adoption.

Applications may be submitted on January 5, 2012. For more information and/or to apply see the announcement at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-12-024.html.

## Practical Interventions to Improve Medication Adherence in Primary Care

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Adherence Network through the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR), with participation from Cancer (NCI), Eye (NEI), Heart, Lung, and Blood (NHLBI), Aging (NIA), Deafness and other Communications Disorders (NIDCD), Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (NIDDK), Mental Health (NIMH), Nursing (NINR), and the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) are seeking applications that propose practical interventions to improve adherence to medication. The Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) recognizes that adherence is inextricably connected to the efficacy of medical treatment regimens and therefore to health outcomes.

According to the FOA, *Practical Interventions to Improve Medication Adherence in Primary Care* (PA-12-022), adherence to a medication treatment regimen is a complex, multi-factorial behavior. It reflects individual behavioral factors such as cognitive functioning, health literacy, self-efficacy and motivation for self-care in addition to the nature of the condition and complexity of the treatment regimen and social factors such as the individual's relationships and access to social support. Additionally, whether a person adheres to medication recommendations also depends on successively larger spheres of influence, such as the patient-provider relationship and/or systemic and organizational factors associated with the health care system.

Finally, the FOA acknowledges that despite the last couple of decades, there is increased need for transformative research in this area. Accordingly, the announcement will support applications that propose to test interventions with the potential to significantly improve medication adherence behaviors in patients with chronic health conditions.

Successful applications should:

- Justify that the approach to improve adherence behavior is feasible (e.g. practical and acceptable) and a potentially sustainable; that is, interventions, which if successful, have the potential to be widely implemented within the current health care system;
- Demonstrate an ability to identify and enroll representative participants with sub-optimal adherence;
- Be the most rigorous design and methodology possible, given the populations and settings in which the study is taking place. In some cases, randomization (by patient, clinic, or community) is possible and feasible; in others, randomization may not be possible, and other rigorous but non-randomized designs (e.g., quasi-experimental) that are both internally and externally valid may be necessary;
- Assess and measure self-reported participant adherence outcomes as a function of the proposed intervention (i.e., did the program alter adherence behaviors?);
- Include a non-self-report measure of adherence, such as MEMS caps, pharmacy refill records, or pill counts;
- Include health outcomes or biomarkers (e.g., blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and viral load in HIV or HbA1c) that are expected to be affected by adherence changes. For diseases without identified biomarkers, such as, mental health disorders, inclusion of a clinical assessment (e.g., a medicine blood level, diagnostic interview or an independent clinician rating of the symptoms and behaviors), should be included.

Additionally, to increase the potential for sustainability, applicants are encouraged to measure costs of the intervention as well as a characteristics and contextual factors that affect implementation and adoption (e.g., necessary personnel, training, feasibility, staff and/or leadership acceptance).

Applications may also include:

- Appropriate contextual factors in the patient's life - e.g., family, community, neighborhood, school, worksite, pharmacy, or other setting(s);

- The intervention may be population-based or a more tailored approach (i.e., individualization based on patient characteristics, and/or directing intensive intervention to those either demonstrating or at-risk for worse adherence based on psychosocial, sociocultural or biological vulnerabilities such as depression, ethnic minorities or those living in poverty, genotype, or physical disability);
- Use technologies (e.g., cellular phone applications, wireless medication monitors) that might enhance adherence.

Potential study topics include, but are not limited to:

- Research testing innovative approaches for maintaining patient adherence to medication regimens through social or peer support, lay health worker delivered approaches (e.g., peer-led, patient navigator, or community health worker), and/or the integration of adherence monitoring/support within routine health care.
- Testing the efficacy of institutional-level interventions that target clinic or provider practice (i.e., health care policy, electronic medical record practices, or physician, nursing and other health care and support staff) in order to promote patient adherence.
- Developing screening tools that will help identify individuals who are non-adherent and test targeted interventions to improve adherence, particularly in groups at high risk for non-adherence such individuals with cognitive impairment, complex medical conditions or regimens, psychiatric comorbidity, and/or substance abuse.
- Studies which test the effectiveness and potency of adherence-promoting interventions that incorporate technological tools to target clinician behavior, patient behavior, both, and/or provider-patient interaction and feedback. For example, how can providers use specific technologies to monitor patient adherence when adding new medication or changing treatment regimens? What "real time" data (e.g., graphical feedback on medication use and any periodic tests that are needed) would providers want to collect in order to monitor adherence and intervene concomitant to the nonadherent behaviors of populations?
- Research to test developmentally and/or culturally appropriate medication adherence interventions among specific risk groups. For example, interventions to address racial and ethnic disparities in treatment adherence and outcomes or to target high risk age groups such as adolescents/young adults and the elderly.
- Studies of brief counseling or peer-led approaches to improving adherence in settings that deliver primary care.
- Research to test interventions that enhance health literacy and/or health numeracy to improve medication adherence in settings that deliver primary care.
- Research testing complementary and alternative medicine approaches to improving medication adherence.

Applications may be submitted after January 5, 2012. More information is available at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-12-022.html.

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