

Fellowship Application Instructions

Annual Application Deadline: April 1

In addition to the normal cohort of INVEST Fellows, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) International Program and Clinical Trials Network (CTN) joined forces to offer the INVEST/CTN Fellowship. The INVEST/CTN Fellowship provides a unique opportunity for non-United States (U.S.) researchers to obtain postdoctoral training with a U.S. mentor who is affiliated with one of the existing CTN Regional Research and Training Centers and whose NIDA-funded grant will be active throughout the proposed fellowship period. Each fellow benefits from an intensive research training experience designed to enhance the fellow's ability to conduct independent research upon return to his or her home country. INVEST/CTN applicants and their mentors may propose to conduct their research in any aspect of the CTN research agenda on drug abuse and addiction, such as intervention research, clinical trials methodology, or drug abuse treatment as HIV/AIDS prevention.

INVEST/CTN Fellowships are awarded for 1 year. During the fellowship, the fellow receives training in drug abuse research methods, develops and conducts a research project with the NIDA-funded grantee, and participates in professional development activities. Fellows also learn about the National Institutes of Health (NIH) grant application process from their U.S. mentor who has successfully sought NIDA support.

Each fellow receives a stipend of \$42,000US to cover living expenses. The fellowship also provides round-trip travel for the fellow only and a \$6,000US allowance to cover the cost of health insurance and professional development activities.

Previous INVEST/CTN Fellows and their U.S. mentors have received NIH support for jointly developed collaborative research projects conducted in the fellow's home country. INVEST/CTN Fellows and their U.S. mentors join a network of international scientists who exchange information and collaborate on drug abuse research nationally, regionally, and globally.

ELIGIBILITY

Requirements for INVEST/CTN **applicants** include:

- An earned doctoral degree in medicine, public health, or biomedical, behavioral, or social science.
- A *minimum* of 2 years of postdoctoral research experience including a demonstrated ability to engage in independent research.
- Written assurance from an institution in the home country that there is a position to which the applicant can return after completing the fellowship.
- Proficiency in written and spoken English.
- Citizenship or permanent residency of a country other than the United States.

- Living and working outside the United States at the time the application is submitted.
- Eligibility for a J-1 visa to enter the United States.

Requirements for INVEST/CTN **mentors** include:

- Must be a NIDA-funded grantee whose grant will be active throughout the proposed fellowship period.
- Must be affiliated with one of the existing CTN Regional Research and Training Centers as identified at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/organization/cctn/ctn>.
- Mentor’s institution must be a sponsor for the U.S. Department of State “J” Exchange Visitor Program, and the mentor’s institution must be eligible to prepare and issue the requisite Form DS-2019 for the INVEST/CTN applicant and his/her dependents.

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

NIDA encourages outstanding early-career scientists to apply for the competitive INVEST/CTN Fellowship. Interested persons should:

1. Contact a NIDA-supported researcher in the United States who is willing to serve as a mentor and develop a joint research plan for the fellowship application. For assistance in locating a potential mentor:
 - Contact one of the existing CTN Regional Research and Training Centers as identified at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/organization/cctn/ctn>.

Additional assistance may be found by:

- Examining the NIH public database—RePORTER (listing research supported by NIH) at <http://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm>.
- Reviewing journals online at PubMed at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed>.
- Reading about the John E. Fogarty International Center international research programs at <http://www.fic.nih.gov/>.
- Reviewing the NIDA International Program web listing of past fellows and mentors at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/international/investctn-drug-abuse-research-fellowship>.

For additional assistance, please email the NIDA International Program at ip@nih.nida.gov or CTN at crossa@nida.nih.gov.

2. Write a detailed plan for working with the U.S. mentor (a NIDA grantee) to conduct research in any aspect of the CTN research agenda on drug abuse and addiction, such as intervention research, clinical trials methodology, or drug abuse treatment as HIV/AIDS prevention. Follow the detailed Research Plan instructions below.
3. Complete the application, which requires contributions from the applicant, the applicant’s current employer, the applicant’s references, the mentor, and the mentor’s institution.

Application Deadline: April 1

Notification of Award: June 1

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. **Incomplete applications will *NOT* be reviewed.**
2. Applications must be type-written, single-spaced and single-sided, and in black ink. Applications must be written in English only.
3. Applicant must complete page 1, Part I, items 1–12 and Part III, items 1 and 2. Applicant also must complete page 2, Applicant section, along with pages 3–8 and page 13.
4. Applicant should attach all supporting documents listed on the Application Checklist, page 2. Applicant should ensure he/she has signed the application on page 1, Part III.
5. Applicant should forward his/her section of the application to the NIDA grantee who has agreed to be his/her U.S. mentor, and also ensure that the ORIGINAL of page 1 has been sent to the mentor to obtain his/her original signature.
6. The mentor will then complete page 1, Part II, items 1–5 and Part III, items 3 and 4. The mentor also completes page 2, Mentor section, along with pages 9–12.
 - a. On page 12, Part XI – Sponsoring Institution Certifications and Assurances, signatures are required from the mentor, **the department head, and an official signing for the sponsoring institution.** The *sponsoring institution official* must be a separate individual from the mentor.
 - b. Once all signatures are secured, the mentor submits the completed application to the NIDA International Program.
7. The mentor will obtain, from his or her institution, a letter confirming the institution as a sponsor for the U.S. State Department “J” Exchange Visitor Program and the institution’s eligibility to prepare and issue the requisite Form DS-2019 for the INVEST/CTN applicant and his/her accompanying dependents.

PROFESSIONAL REFERENCES

On page 13, Reference Report, the applicant completes Part I of the form. The applicant should provide a copy of the Reference Report form to each of the three professional references (preferably one from the home country supervisor and two from research colleagues).

Each reference will complete Part II of the Reference Report including the rating scale. Each reference also must attach a letter of reference as explained in Part III. Each reference must submit the completed Reference Report and letter of reference directly to the NIDA International Program.

APPLICATION AND REFERENCE SUBMISSION

Submit the completed application by the **April 1** deadline to:

INVEST/CTN Drug Abuse Research Fellowship Program
c/o IQ Solutions, Inc.
11300 Rockville Pike, Suite 901
Rockville, MD 20852 USA
Telephone: +1-301-984-1471 | Fax: +1-301-984-1473
Email: ip@nida.nih.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- <http://www.drugabuse.gov/international>
- <http://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/organization/cctn/ctn>
- Email: ip@nida.nih.gov
- Email: crosa@nida.nih.gov

PREPARING YOUR INVEST/CTN FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH PLAN

The Research Plan (Part VI, pages 5–7) is the most important part of the application. This section should be well formulated and presented in sufficient detail so that reviewers can evaluate its scientific merit. The applicant should actively seek the advice and cooperation of the U.S. mentor while preparing the Research Plan. The U.S. mentor's collaboration is important, but the *applicant* must write the Research Plan. Be specific and informative, and avoid redundancy. Brevity and clarity in the description of the Research Plan are considered indicative of an applicant's approach to the research objective and ability to conduct a superior project. The Research Plan *should not exceed 10 pages* in addition to the face page. Literature citations are not included in the page limit. The applicant should use the following format:

- (1) ***Specific Aims***. State the specific purposes of the research and the hypotheses to be tested.
- (2) ***Background and Significance***. Briefly describe the background of the Research Plan. This is an important consideration in the initial review of your application. Concisely state the importance of the Research Plan by relating specific aims to broad, long-term objectives.
- (3) ***Research Design and Methods***. Discuss in detail the following:
 - The research design and procedures to be used to accomplish the specific aims
 - Sampling design, if conducting primary data collection
 - The analytic plan detailing the statistical approach to addressing the hypotheses
 - Any precautions necessary for procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel
 - Potential limitations of the proposed project
 - The timeline for completion of the proposed investigation
 - The contributions that this project will make to the field of drug abuse research.
- (4) ***NIH Regulations on the Conduct of Research***. Research conducted as part of an INVEST/CTN Fellowship is subject to the same U.S. Federal regulations, policies, guidelines, and review considerations as are all NIH research project grant applications. In this section of the Research Plan, applicants must demonstrate that they understand and have planned to comply with those rules, particularly if the research involves human subjects or vertebrate animals. For a complete discussion of the NIH regulations, consult the NIH Grants Policy Statement at http://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/nihgps_2010/index.htm or Part III, Section 2 of the *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service Grant Application, PHS 398 Instructions*, <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/funding/phs398/phs398.html>.

- (5) **Literature Citations.** Provide literature citations at the end of the Research Plan. Each citation must include the authors' names, book or journal titles, volume number, page numbers, and year of publication.

REVIEW CRITERIA

Applications are peer-reviewed through a competitive process and assessed according to scientific merit, the proposal's relevance to drug abuse and NIDA's research mission, adequacy of the applicant's education and experience to conduct the proposed research, likelihood that the proposed research can be completed within 1 year, and compatibility of the applicant's and mentor's objectives. Several factors may enhance the rating of an application, even though all of these items are not necessarily required.

APPLICANT

- Previous experience and education are commensurate with the proposed study.
- Although not yet considered a senior scientist, the applicant has demonstrated sufficient research experience to successfully complete the proposed study.
- The letters of reference support the applicant's scientific record.
- The applicant has authored a peer-reviewed scientific article in the area of the proposed research.

RESEARCH PLAN

- Describes how the proposed study is unique, how it will expand or advance the field of drug abuse research, and how it is consistent with the applicant's career goals.
- Clearly and concisely states proposed aims, goals, and objectives appropriate to the stated hypotheses, conveying scientific sophistication and strong analytical skills.
- Thoroughly reviews the relevant literature.
- Acknowledges any potential regulatory issues or methodological limitations.
- Clearly states the applicant's role in the proposed research and the collaborative plan between the applicant and the mentor.
- Describes what skills and experiences will be gained in the process of working with the mentor, why that proposed training would not otherwise be available to the applicant, and how those skills will be utilized when the applicant returns home.
- Includes a realistic timeline for completing the proposed study within the 1-year fellowship.

RESEARCH RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

- Mentor has significant expertise in the research area.
- Mentor has a NIDA grant that will remain active throughout the fellowship period.
- Mentor has experience training fellows or other graduate-level students.

- Mentor's institution is able to provide the resources necessary for the successful completion of the fellowship.
- Mentor's research complements the applicant's proposed study.
- Mentor demonstrates how he/she will ensure that the applicant is knowledgeable about and able to comply with NIH regulations regarding the conduct of research.