

AbstractID: 2306 Title: Insider's view of Imaging Technology Grant Review and Funding at NCI

Knowing something about the review and funding processes at the NIH Institutes and Centers can help a new investigator prepare and get a grant. New grants share in funds left after commitments to existing non-competing grants are paid. When NCI's Congressional budget allocation rises, so do numbers of funded new and renewal grants. And when the budget falls, the risk falls more heavily on this group. These swings are buffered to a moderate extent. One approach is to impose "policy-cuts" on budgets of new and renewal grants, e.g., -0 to -11% last year; -5 to -18% this year, to free funds for more of them. Another approach relies on fund shifts to or from special emphasis projects. Imaging Technology grant numbers have grown rapidly in recent years in part because they were recognized as projects of special opportunity, interest and emphasis at NCI. Evidence for this is stated in Research Priority Statements in recent NCI Annual Budget Requests and executed in creation of their Cancer Imaging Program, which has issued a number of Technology Development Program Announcements. Another challenge faced by new applicants comes from variables in the application review process. Many study sections previously saw mainly hypothesis driven applications. A number of them have been evolving to better accommodate technology or method development proposals that rely on engineering approaches for problem solving, feasibility testing, prototype development, and iterative optimization to achieve performance specifications of the design.