MAKING IT RAIN: HOW TO GET YOUR GRANT APPLICATION FUNDED BY NIH

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WHAT DOES NIH FUND?

High impact research on public health and well-being

A gap in the literature is not enough: grant application ≠ journal article

Consult NIH Institute and Center priorities, review NIH web site on the grant process

Payline is roughly 10-12% (varies by agency and mechanism)

BEFORE GRANT WRITING: INITIAL STEPS

Discuss your project idea with colleagues, especially those with NIH experience

Identify the appropriate NIH Program Officer (PO)

Email the PO your "elevator speech" version of your project

Obtain one or two funded applications to view examples of successful applications

The BGSU Advantage: R15 Academic Research Enhancement Award

PREPARING YOUR GRANT

NO BRAINER: Draft your application early, get feedback from colleagues, and revise

Integrate NIH goals (eg, from Health People 2020 or reports from specific institutes) in your application

Write your application so that reviewers outside of your narrow area of expertise can understand and appreciate your proposed project

Draw attention to sentences that speak directly to the review criteria by using bolded text

BE BOLD!

SIGNIFICANCE

The rate of gray divorce (divorce after age 50) has doubled in the past two decades. In 2010, there were 10 divorces per 1,000 married population ages 50 and older versus 5 divorces in 1990 (Brown & Lin, 2012). Among persons ages 50-64, the divorce rate was 13 divorces per 1,000 married population in 2010 versus 7 divorces in 1990. This growth in the gray divorce rate means older adults comprise a larger share of all persons who divorce. Over 25% of people who got divorced in 2010 were ages 50 and older versus just 8% in 1990. This rise partially reflects the aging of the population, but also the actual increase in the rate of divorce among older adults. Regardless, the number of adults who experience gray divorce is large and likely to continue to accelerate rapidly. Even if the gray divorce rate were to remain at the 2010 level (a conservative assumption), the number of people over age 50 experiencing divorce would rise 33% (from roughly 600,000 to 800,000) by 2030, according to our estimates (Brown & Lin, 2012). The increase in divorced older adults means a growing share is eligible to form a new partnership, whether through cohabitation or remarriage.

The recent rise in gray divorce coupled with the aging of the population foregrounds the urgency of investigating how life course factors are associated with divorce and subsequent repartnering during older adulthood. It also raises new questions about how gray divorce and subsequent repartnering are linked to individual well-being. Our recent study using the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) shows that the basic demographic correlates of divorce (e.g., education, race, and age) are also similarly related to divorce after age 50 (Brown & Lin, 2012). But, apart from establishing that marriage order (i.e., first marriage versus remarriage) and marital duration are linked to the likelihood of gray divorce, the ACS data did not permit an examination of the life course specific factors that are arguably uniquely relevant for this age group, namely the experience of empty nest, retirement, and declining health. In-depth qualitative interviews with gray divorcees suggest these key turning points may heighten the risk of divorce (Bair, 2007), but these factors have not been systematically examined. And, despite an extensive literature on the (often negative) consequences of divorce for younger people, no recent empirical study has examined how gray divorce is related to changes in individual well-being. Gerontological research has focused on widowhood, ignoring union dissolution that occurs by divorce. This narrow focus is misguided now that widowhood is declining (Manning & Brown, 2011) and gray divorce is on the rise.

To examine the divorce and repartnering experiences of midlife and older adults, we use prospective, longitudinal data from the 1992-2010 Health and Retirement Study (HRS), a NIA- and Social Security Administration-funded data collection that is the premier source for understanding the economic and health challenges and opportunities of aging. The original HRS sample included a cohort born 1931-1941 who were 51-61 in 1992. Since then, additional cohorts have been folded in, allowing researchers to examine midlife and older adult experiences unfold over time. Midlife is an important milestone (Karp, 1988). During this life phase, more people face the emergence of health problems, grown children are leaving home, and individuals begin to think about retirement. These key life course transitions may serve as turning points, reshaping individuals' priorities, including their marriage. Prior research has established linkages between these life transitions and marital quality among older adults (Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001; White & Edwards, 1990; Yorgason, Booth, & Johnson, 2008). But how these life transitions are associated with gray divorce or the ramifications for older adult well-being have been largely overlooked in the literature, probably because gray divorce was considered a rare event. This is no longer true today.

HOW THE NIH PEER REVIEW PROCESS WORKS

The Scientific Review Officer (SRO) assigns the application to a study section

Study sections are organized and convened by the SRO—review rosters online

All applications assigned to a study section are reviewed, but only some are scored

Applications scored within the Center/Institute's funding range are reviewed by Council prior to grant award

National Institutes of Health
Grants Process
At-A-Glance

Planning, Writing, and Submitting

Planning: Applicant should start early, collect preliminary data, and determine internal deadlines.

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Writing: Applicant often begins writing application several months prior to application due date

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Submitting: Applicant organization submits most applications to NIH through the Federal portal, *Grants.gov*.

Receipt and Referral
1 – 3 Months

Applications compliant with NIH policies are assigned for review by the Division of Receipt and Referral in the Center for Scientific Review (CSR).

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CSR assigns application to an NIH Institute/Center (IC) and a Scientific Review Group (SRG).

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Scientific Review Officer (SRO) assigns applications to reviewers and readers.

Peer Review
4 – 8 Months

Initial Level of Review: SRG members review and evaluate applications for scientific merit.

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Priority Scores: Available to Principal Investigator in eRA Commons.

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Summary Statement: Available to Principal Investigator in eRA Commons.

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Second Level of Review: Advisory council/board reviews applications.

Award
9 – 10 Months

NIH Requests additional information needed Just-In-Time for award.

Pre-Award Process: IC grants management staff conducts final administrative review and negotiates award.*

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Notification of Award: Institute/Center issues and sends Notice of Award (NoA) to applicant institution/organization.

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Congratulations! Project period officially begins!

Post-Award Management

Administrative and fiscal monitoring, reporting, and compliance

Visit: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/grants_process.htm for more about the NIH grants process

NIH National Institutes of Health
Office of Extramural Research

THINK LIKE A REVIEWER

Reviewers assess the strengths and weaknesses of applications on several criteria:

1. Overall Scientific Impact

2. Significance

3. Investigators

4. Innovation

5. Approach

6. Environment

INSIDE THE STUDY SECTION MEETING

BEFORE THE MEETING

Study section members receive a list of applications that will be reviewed during the meeting and are asked to report their expertise and conflicts for each application.

Members are assigned applications to review. They write a paragraph summarizing the overall impact of the project and then address the five review criteria.

Reviewers score assigned applications, providing both an overall score and scores on the five criteria. Scores and reviews are posted online prior to the meeting.

NIH SCORING SYSTEM

Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact
Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact
Major Weakness: A weakness that severely limits impact

DURING THE MEETING

Study section members receive a list of the grants rank ordered by their preliminary scores. Applications with worse scores are not discussed (unscored).

Discussion of an application:

- Chair asks reviewers to state their preliminary scores
- Reviewer 1 provides a summary of the application, emphasizing its strengths and weaknesses across the review criteria
- Reviewers 2 and 3 provide their assessments
- The discussion is open to the entire group to ask questions and weigh in with their opinions
- Chair inquires about Human Subjects
- Chair invites reviewers to revisit their initial scores. This establishes the scoring range.
- All members score within the range, or state they wish to score outside of the range
- Chair asks reviewers for any comments on the budget

AFTER THE MEETING

Reviewers edit their critiques to match their revised scores

SROs write a summary of the study group's discussion of the application's strengths and weaknesses that is provided to the applicant along with the reviews
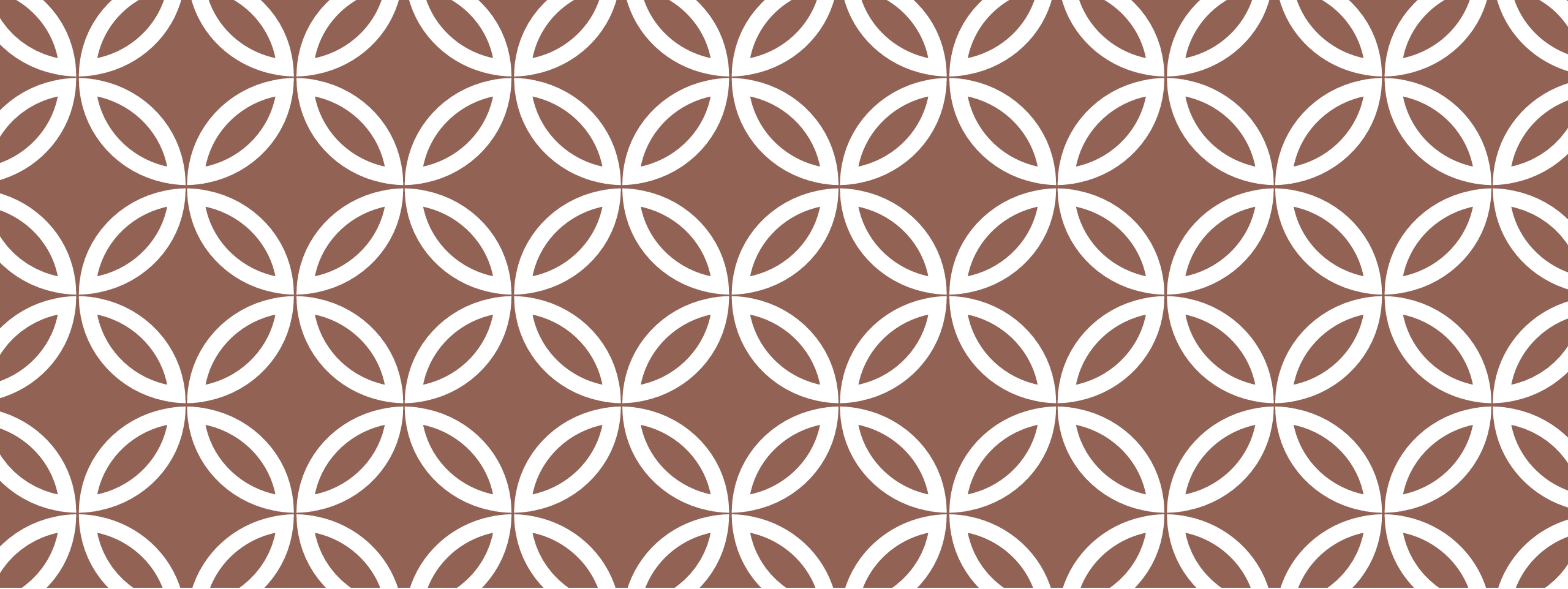
I GOT MY SCORE—WHAT'S NEXT?

Review the summary statement

Email your PO to ask about the funding line and to discuss reviewer feedback on your application

Should you revise your application?

THANK YOU!

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