

Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) Comments

B5: Other Reasons for Implementing Modular Grants

(35.9% said yes, there are additional reasons for implementing modular grants)

Main Themes:

- Simplify the grant process and reduce burden for PIs, peer reviewers, grants management staff at NIH and the PI's institution
- Focus efforts of peer reviewers on scientific content of the grant; prevent study section meetings from focusing on the budget

E2b: Raise Modular Grant Limit Beyond \$250K

(Of those that had a preference, 28.2% said they would prefer the limit to be higher than \$250,000)

Main Theme:

- The cost of research has increased due to inflation; the \$250,000 limit was set several years ago and should be re-adjusted to match current costs
- Limit should be raised to allow complex studies, those with higher personnel costs, or those involving human research to use the modular grant format

E2c: Keep Modular Grant Limit at 250K

(Of those that had a preference, 71.8% said they would prefer that the limit not be higher than \$250,000)

Main Themes:

- Current cap is sufficient and adequately covers majority of grants submitted; format is fine/most appropriate for small, single projects; PIs can ask for more money (using a non-modular grant application) if need be
- If the limit were increased, the amount of funding requested by the PIs would increase accordingly; many PIs ask for the maximum now and they would continue to ask for the maximum amount if the limit were raised
- Larger, more complex projects should include a detailed budget; reviewers would be unable to conduct a quality review and would be uncomfortable without detailed budget information for higher cost grants.

Additional Comments:

- The modular grant format should be eliminated

E3: Reasons for Liking Modular Grants

(60.8% of SRAs made a comment when asked about the aspects of the modular grant application process they like)

Main Themes:

- Simplicity of grant administration, reduced budget discussions

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- Focuses attention of reviewers on the scientific content of the application
- Modular format discourages peer reviewers from “nit-picking”, “nickel and dime-ing”, and “haggling” over dollars and cents
- Reduces meeting time; less time spent in study section discussing budget issues (peer reviewers do not try to “micromanage” budget issues); speeds up the grant process overall
- Reduces administration burden for SRAs (easier to handle budgets, don’t have to provide budget details when reduction is recommended, don’t need to ask for clarification on prepared budgets, etc.).
- Modular grants provide flexibility for the PIs

E4: Reasons for Disliking Modular Grants

(57.9% of SRAs made a comment when asked about the aspects of the modular grant application process they did not like)

Main Themes:

- Reviewers have difficulty assessing whether the proposed cost of the study is reasonable - lack of PI salary information and Other Support pages contribute to this problem
- Reviewers feel uncomfortable and have difficulty recommending budget cuts
- PIs have inflated their budgets, resulting in higher award amounts, greater costs to NIH, and fewer funded grants