



**European Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology
Research Funding Programmes:
Survey of Researchers and Institutions
on National Institutes of Health Grant Funding**

Executive Summary



February 2011

About the Link2US Project

The Link2US project facilitates easy access to relevant information on U.S. cooperation programmes through electronic communities such as a website, e-newsletter, and virtual helpdesk and designated activities such as training workshops.

Link2US is:

- Mapping opportunities of U.S. federal collaborative funding schemes and rules for participation through research and analyses.
- Raising awareness among the European scientific community by disseminating information about programmes and funding opportunities through a multi-faceted network.
- Identifying and analyzing potential obstacles to cooperation through these programmes and funding schemes so that they may be avoided and/or that solutions may be found.

Link2US is coordinated by the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and implemented together with the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG), Hungarian Science & Technology Foundation (TETALAP), and Italy's Agency for the Promotion of European Research (APRE).

Link2US is co-funded by the European Union's Capacities Programme on International Cooperation of the 7th Framework Programme on Research and Technological Cooperation under grant agreement number 244371.

For more information:

www.EuUsScienceTechnology.eu/Link2US/



Acknowledgments

The authors, Stephanie Papia, Program Associate, and Tom Wang, Director for International Cooperation, American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), gratefully acknowledge the many researchers and university grants administrators who responded to this survey and provided their invaluable input. We thank the Link2US project partners and members of the project advisory group for reviewing and providing feedback on drafts of this report. We would also like to thank Dr. Patriq Fagerstedt of the Karolinska Institute's Grant Office for his input into the initial development of the questionnaires.

Disclaimer

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Executive Summary

European Union (EU)-based researcher and institution participation in United States (U.S.) federal science and technology (S&T) research funding programmes is significantly impacted by a diverse set of rules and regulations. Participation can and does take place in various forms, from direct funding to subcontracting to cooperative agreements. The U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) has the largest programmes in which there is direct funding of EU-based researchers and institutions. The *European Participation in U.S. Federal Science & Technology Research Funding Programmes: Survey of Researchers and Institutions on NIH Grant Funding* surveyed EU-based researchers and institutions, through their grants administrators, who have received direct NIH awards during U.S. fiscal year 2003-2010 to identify key issues that they face when applying to and participating in NIH funding programmes.

The survey asked researchers and grants administrators (GA's) about their experiences with NIH, on issues ranging from awareness of opportunities to legal, policy, and administrative aspects of programme participation, and recommendations for lessons and improvements to support further U.S. and European cooperation. Responses were received from 78 researchers (out of 308 contacted) and 18 GA's (out of 88 contacted) and were dominated by those from the United Kingdom with significant numbers also from Sweden, Germany, France, and Italy.

The survey found:

NIH programmes were researcher-friendly but policy differences between NIH and European institutions make grant administration challenging.

Researchers overall had positive experiences with NIH and its programmes. Researchers described most of the issues raised in the survey as less challenging compared with other, non-NIH programmes, including areas of cultural differences in grant management; broad administrative and contractual issues, including auditing, budgeting, and intellectual property (IP); differences in U.S. and European policies; additional review criteria for non-U.S.-based applicants; and lack of complementary funding. A plurality of researchers indicated that improved administrative support from their own organizations, clarity about eligibility and other requirements for non-U.S.-based institutions, and facilities and administrative (F&A) cost recovery were more challenging issues than with other programmes.

European GA's experienced overall more challenges than researchers. Besides the challenges of F&A cost recovery and communication and information awareness, especially how NIH policies and EU-applicable opportunities and requirements are presented (e.g., difficulties in understanding U.S. legal language), a plurality or majority of GA's also indicated the following issues as more challenging compared with other, non-NIH, programmes: differences between U.S. and European policies; lack of administrative support from NIH; audit requirements, IP, and other contractual issues.

NIH's funding system was praised as transparent and highly respected with helpful NIH programme staff.

Both researchers and GA's highlighted NIH's peer review system, particularly its transparent review process and feedback mechanisms, as one of the most positive aspects of its programmes and an example for other funding entities. Moreover, both groups remarked on the relative bureaucratic ease of NIH programmes and on the helpfulness of NIH programme staff.

Suggestions focused on improving already open and efficient NIH programmes.

To further improve research collaboration between the United States and Europe through NIH programmes, researchers and GA's suggested improving clarity of eligibility criteria and opportunities for EU-based researchers, increasing support for addressing NIH and European differences in administrative requirements and policies, developing specific funding for U.S.-European collaboration, and allowing full F&A cost recovery. Besides some very practical ways to enhance the existing programmes like improving communication and information awareness, the survey results suggest two areas that would be useful for further elaboration: exploration of policy requirements (e.g., ethical, health, safety, etc.) that could be better harmonized between the U.S. and Europe; and the structure of potential new, specific U.S.-European instruments.