

OPTI-West Research & Faculty Development E-Bulletin

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2009 AHRQ PBRN ANNOUNCEMENT

As most of you are aware, AHRQ and other agencies within DHHS have been operating since October 2008 on a continuing resolution, which means the funds available to the agency to support research activities have been frozen at the same level of funding that was available in fiscal year 2008. Until now, the assumption has been that Congress would simply extend the continuing resolution until the end of fiscal year 2009. However, I wanted to make the PBRN community aware of the emerging (and strong) possibility that the new Congress will come together and actually approve a new 2009 budget for DHHS that is reflective of the spending priorities of the new Administration. The good news is that, should this happen, AHRQ may suddenly have as much as \$13 million to spend this year on investigator-initiated grants. The less good news is that these new funds will have to be spent before September 30th.

What could this mean for the PBRN community? Over the past couple of years, many PBRN investigators have asked me about the advisability of submitting grant applications to AHRQ for primary care-related projects that sound interesting and potentially important but are not a good fit with AHRQ's current batch of RFAs (which have generally focused on patient safety, health IT or comparative effectiveness). While not discouraging these investigators from applying to AHRQ, I have consistently tried to make them aware that – whenever there's a relatively small amount of funds available for investigator-initiated projects -- the competition among such applications is intense, with typically less than a 10% chance of being funded. A sudden infusion of unexpected money into the funds available to AHRQ for investigator-initiated projects could dramatically change this equation such that the chances of an investigator-initiated project being funded in fiscal year 2009 will be greater than they've been for many years. Unfortunately, in order for your application to be eligible for funding with this year's money, your proposal must be submitted no later than the upcoming March deadlines. Please refer to the program announcements listed on the AHRQ website -- for R01 or R18 applications, the deadline is March 9; for R03 applications, the deadline is March 24. If you already have an investigator-initiated application in the grants review pipeline at AHRQ, you need do nothing further at this point.

Please understand that neither I (nor anyone else) can guarantee at this point that Congress will approve a new 2009 budget that ends up being this favorable to AHRQ. However, I thought it important to give you the heads-up that should you have a proposal (or an idea) for an

investigator-initiated PBRN project that's appropriate for AHRQ but has been sitting on a shelf waiting for a more favorable funding environment, now is definitely the time to start getting ready to submit an application to AHRQ. Please feel free to call (301-427-1567) me if you have specific questions. David Lanier

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