

A Closer Look at NIH's High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program

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The [High-Risk, High-Reward Research Program](#) at the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH) is designed to function like a “venture capital space” by accelerating the pace of research with the potential to transform medicine and human health. Three panelists from the NIH Common Fund, part of the Office of Strategic Coordination—Program Leader Ravi Basavappa, Program Officer Becky Miller, and Health Science Policy Analyst Makyba Charles-Ayinde—spoke about the opportunities for this program to support psychological science during an APS [funding-focused webinar](#) recorded August 11.

There are four High-Risk, High-Reward initiatives, explained Charles-Ayinde, with the same core criteria: Although no preliminary data are required, projects must be unique, transformative, and cross-cutting, with the potential to move the needle on big issues related to basic, applied, or clinical behavioral and social sciences. Past projects related to substance abuse, for example, have focused on how neighborhood structure and mental health contribute to addiction and how the brains of people who use opiates regulate their bodies to promote survival.

“Even if you feel like your idea is really out of the box, we do encourage those applications,” Charles-Ayinde said.

Each of the four High-Risk, High-Reward initiatives has its own additional requirements:

- The **Pioneer Award** supports individual scientists at any career level in tackling major challenges in behavioral and biomedical research from a new direction. The award provides \$700,000 per year for 5 years.
- The **New Innovator Award** supports early-career investigators within 10 years of their doctoral degree or clinical training who haven't received an NIH award before and want to pursue innovative, high-impact research. The award provides a total of \$1.5 million in funding over a 5-year period.
- The **Transformative Research Award** supports individuals or teams of scientists looking to carry out unconventional research with the potential to create or overturn fundamental paradigms. The award provides a flexible budget.
- The **Early Independence Award** allows early-career scientists to skip the traditional postdoc in favor of pursuing independent research at a host institution. The award provides up to \$250,000 in funding over a 5-year period.

“As an advocate for behavioral and social sciences, I'm always really thrilled when a science-wide program like High-Risk, High-Reward takes the time to welcome and invite members of our field to apply and participate,” said APS Director of Government Relations Andy DeSoto during the webinar.

For more information on these awards, [visit the High-Risk, High-Reward website](#). There will be a High-Risk, High-Reward Research Symposium in Bethesda, Maryland, from June 8 to 10, 2022.