

2026 NIH Navigation Cohort

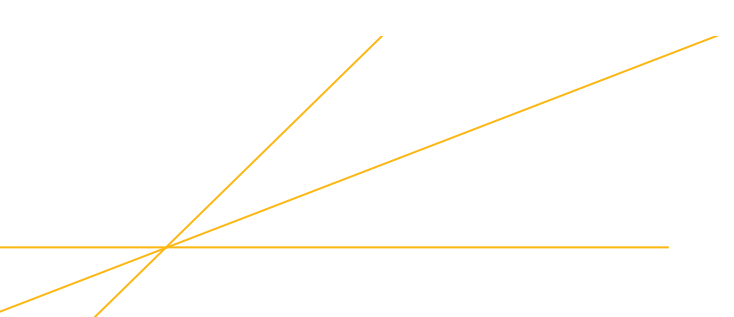
Overview

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is the nation's medical research agency and a critical source of funding for health-related science, including family planning. However, family planning research has historically received a [disproportionately small share of NIH investment](#), situated within a broader context of [underinvestment in women's health research](#).

Built in direct response to Society of Family Planning members' feedback on the need for support navigating the NIH application process, the Society's NIH Navigation Cohort is a proposal development program for members actively developing NIH applications on family planning topics focused in the US. Now in its sixth iteration, the program's goals are to support Society members in developing competitive applications and to strengthen the scientific exchange between family planning researchers and the NIH. As the federal funding landscape continues to evolve, the Society remains firmly committed to supporting family planning researchers in pursuing this important work.

Program

This writing-intensive program, led by [Vanessa Dalton](#), [Cynthia Gómez](#), and [David Turok](#), is designed to help participants refine and enhance their proposals in a peer-review setting. The program is intended to complement participants' other sources of NIH support, such as institutional grant-writing workshops, by offering a unique opportunity to receive feedback on their proposals from subject-matter experts. To make the most of the program's feedback structure, participants are expected to come in with a well-developed research concept and a complete draft of their Specific Aims.



Participants will take part in 14 sessions between August 26, 2026 and April 14, 2027 focused on key components of the NIH application. Participants will share drafts of sections of the application in advance of each session and then meet to receive substantive feedback from faculty and peers. The program will culminate in a mock study section review, simulating the NIH peer review process, with the expectation that participants will submit their final proposals for NIH consideration. The cohort will be capped at eight participants to maximize opportunities for feedback and dialogue.

We invite members to [apply](#) in joining the NIH Navigation Cohort by June 10, 2026 at 8:59 pm PT/ 11:59 pm ET.

Eligibility

The program is open to individuals who:

- Are current Society members;
- Are developing an R- or K-series application focused on a family planning topic in the US (including US territories);
- Have a complete draft of their Specific Aims;
- Have not participated in the Society's NIH Navigation Cohort within the past two years (ie, 2025 or 2024 cohorts);
- Can commit to full participation in the program. This includes not only attending scheduled sessions (see schedule below), but also periodic check-ins with faculty, significant writing work between sessions, and peer review of other participants' materials.

Please note that the Society prioritizes applicants seeking R-series funding, as reflected in the review criteria.

[Apply](#) by June 10, 2026

Selection process

All eligible applications will be reviewed according to the following criteria.

Review criteria	Weight
<u>Proposal type</u> The Society seeks applicants developing R-series grant applications; K-series applicants are eligible but will be given lower priority.	10%
<u>Research foundation</u> The Society seeks applicants with a research background that will enable productive engagement in the program and meaningful progress on their application.	35%
<u>Scientific readiness</u> The Society seeks applicants with projects that are sufficiently developed to support meaningful progress toward an NIH application during the program.	40%
<u>Positionality</u> The Society seeks applicants who demonstrate thoughtful reflection on how their race and ethnicity, and other relevant identities and lived experiences, will shape their contributions to the cohort.	15%

Schedule

All sessions will be held via Zoom from 1:00 - 3:00 pm PT/ 4:00 - 6:00 pm ET. Multiple absences or missed participation in peer review will prompt a conversation with faculty about continued participation in the cohort. In addition to sessions, participants will be expected to attend up to four faculty check-ins throughout the program. Dates and times will be coordinated directly with participants.

- Session 1: Introductions; Pitching your study - August 26
- Session 2: Specific Aims, first pass - September 9
- Session 3: Specific Aims, second pass - September 23
- Session 4: Overview of application components, language and framing; Navigating your institution under the current administration - October 14
- Session 5: Session TBD, tailored to cohort composition - October 28
- Session 6: Approach, first pass - November 18
- Session 7: Approach, second pass - December 9
- Session 8: Session TBD, tailored to cohort composition - December 16
- Session 9: Biosketch and identifying mentors, alternate funding sources - January 6
- Session 10: Significance and innovation - January 13
- Session 11: Budget and dissemination plan - January 27
- Session 12: Specific Aims and Approach, final pass - February 10
- Session 13: Final session for feedback, pre-mock study - February 24
- Session 14: Mock study section - April 14

Questions

The Society welcomes the opportunity to clarify or assist with any application components. Please contact ResearchProgramming@SocietyFP.org.