

NCI Select Pay Awards Policy

Each fiscal year, NCI establishes paylines for competing grant applications, with different paylines for different grant mechanisms (R01, R21, etc.). In applying the payline, NCI generally awards funding to nearly all grant applications with peer review scores better than or equal to the payline NCI establishes.

For grant applications with peer review scores outside the payline, NCI may use “select pay” to fund a limited number of applications each fiscal year. **Applicants cannot apply for select pay funding.**

NCI may establish a pool of applications with a narrow range of peer review scores. NCI may then evaluate the applications in this pool for select pay.

NCI uses a holistic approach based on a variety of considerations when deciding whether to award select pay. Select pay can help ensure balance across the pool of NCI competing and continuing (non-competing type-5) grants. Select pay can also expand the breadth of NCI research topics and help ensure a broad diversity of approaches to conducting research within the National Cancer Program. Therefore, select pay can increase the breadth of applicants that NCI funds and research topics NCI supports.

Examples of factors NCI may consider in awarding select pay:

- Scientific merit.
- Relevance of the research to NCI's mission.
- Applications proposing research that offers the potential to reduce the incidence of cancer in populations experiencing higher cancer incidence or higher cancer mortality compared to the overall population.
- Applications that address gaps in cancer research.
- Applications that may reduce health disparities.
- Applications that may reduce gaps in cancer research, training, education, or outreach to underserved communities.
- Research projects that address the needs of vulnerable, marginalized, medically underserved or underinsured populations, either within (locally) or beyond (nationally) the catchment areas of NCI-designated Cancer Centers or research projects addressing the needs of such populations in an international context.
- Applications that would support an Early Stage Investigator or an investigator who has no other active NCI funding.
- Applications with the potential to expand the diversity of thought, experience, and/or perspective within the cancer research or clinical workforce.
- Applications that may increase the breadth (e.g., type, size, and geographic distribution) of research institutions receiving NCI grants.
- Applications that propose pursuing emerging or transformative research that may be difficult to evaluate through peer review.
- Applications in response to an NCI scientific priority as identified in a PAR or NOSI.
- Factors that may have been overlooked, unduly emphasized, or inadequately considered during peer review.
- Other factors that are present or may emerge from year to year (disaster relief, public health emergencies as declared by the Secretary of HHS, etc.).

The importance of the individual factors listed above varies from year to year. The pool of competing applications and continuing grants is dynamic, not static, from one fiscal year to the next. Scientific priorities evolve and unanticipated research gaps may emerge. Thus, factors may become significant in a given year based on NCI's ongoing analysis of its non-competing grants and the competing grants NCI will fund during the fiscal year.