AHRQ Update

Research Funding Opportunities: Fiscal Year 2006

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In the June 2004 AHRQ Update, we unveiled the new mission and strategic goals of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. The update detailed AHRQ's reinvigorated focus on ensuring that the research we support is translated into meaningful improvements in the American health care system (Clancy 2004). That Update also discussed the challenges and opportunities in funding research presented by the Agency's fiscal year (FY) 2005 budget request to the U.S. Congress.

Details of AHRQ's FY 2006 budget request are available on the AHRQ Web site at <http://www.ahrq.gov/about/cj2006/cjweb06.htm> (Budget Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Fiscal Year 2006). Briefly stated, AHRQ has requested \$318.7 million in FY 2006, the same level as FY 2005. The FY 2006 request enables AHRQ to continue efforts in our priority activities to improve patient safety through the implementation of proven and innovative health information technologies and comparative effectiveness research under our new Effective Health Care Program (Clancy, Slutsky, and Patton 2004).

In addition to addressing these priority areas, AHRQ will continue to address the significant issues facing the health care system by producing, translating, and disseminating research findings geared toward transforming and improving our health care system.

AHRQ is now awaiting congressional action on our fiscal year 2006 budget request. We are very pleased to report that in FY 2006, AHRQ will have additional funding flexibility and some exciting new funding opportunities which we will describe in this Update.

FROM BASIC HSR TO APPLIED RESEARCH

AHRQ always looks forward eagerly to the innovative ideas and research questions posed by health services researchers. However, all funding

opportunities offered by AHRQ—whether solicited or unsolicited—must fit into the context of our new mission statement: “to improve the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.”

This mission statement reflects a shift in the scope and nature of the research we fund. Supporting the basic science of health services research is important, but now AHRQ is adding increased emphasis on funding applied and demonstration research that has a demonstrable impact on health care and the health care system. As we noted in the June 2004 AHRQ Update, “although AHRQ is first and foremost a research funding agency, we recognize that research is not an end in itself, but rather, a vehicle to improve health care, and ultimately, health.”

We have changed our focus to meet the needs of America’s rapidly evolving health care system. All sectors of the system—providers, purchasers, policymakers, researchers, and the public—need evidence-based information to deal with such issues as patient safety, quality, and disparities in health care. This research needs to do more than identify problems; it must develop viable solutions.

As the best and brightest in health services research, we feel that the readers of *HSR* are up to the challenge of maintaining the excellence of the research enterprise while making it more relevant and focused on action and impact. As a research funder, AHRQ is creating as many opportunities as possible to support your efforts within the limitations of our congressionally mandated budget.

NEW FLEXIBILITY, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

In FY 2006, AHRQ will solicit applications through a number of Requests for Applications and Program Announcements. We will also have some flexibility to support unsolicited applications, applications—submitted by researchers on regular application receipt dates. At this time, we can’t estimate how much funding for unsolicited research will be available; however, we strongly encourage you to apply, and apply early.

These unsolicited projects must support AHRQ’s new mission and reflect the Agency’s research priorities which are spelled out in a Program Announcement on our Web site: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-00-111.html>. In order to be sure that your projects support the new mission, AHRQ encourages you to contact Agency staff early to discuss your ideas. The Web site also includes a list of Agency staff contacts that can help

you determine whether your project fits the Agency's research priority areas. The list can be found at <http://www.ahrq.gov/fund/pacntcts.htm#HSR>.

AHRQ also provides a number of specific funding opportunities that encourage research innovation but which still support AHRQ's mission and priorities. These include large conference grants and small grants, which provide up to \$100,000 per year to pilot test new ideas, develop research agendas, and identify strategies to translate research into practice. In addition, AHRQ will continue to fund training and career development awards, including dissertation and K-type awards. These funding announcements as well as Agency staff contacts are available on the AHRQ Web site at <http://www.ahrq.gov/fund/>.

We take great pride in the health care "stars" who have benefited from AHRQ training and dissertation funding. AHRQ stars can be found in clinical medicine, academic settings, government, and many other settings where they are making a difference in health. We are particularly sensitive to the challenges confronting new investigators as they embark on their careers, and we are prepared to work with you to obtain support for your work. Our goal is to help you become an AHRQ star.

TIPS FOR GETTING A GRANT

We would like to offer you some basic tips that will get you started on the path to grant funding. These tips will help you write a grant application that will support AHRQ's research priorities and fulfill our mission.

1. *Identify who will use your findings and how they will use them before writing and submitting your grant application.* A hallmark of our new mission and strategic goals is to ensure that the findings of AHRQ-supported research are used to make meaningful improvements in the health care system. To that end, you should have a clear idea of who will potentially use your research and how they would use it to change health care practice or policy.
2. *Consult with users early when developing and refining your idea.* We urge you to consult with potential users about your planned research and how to develop your concept in a way that could help them adopt the findings quickly and efficiently. As part of these discussions, you should find out what type of format for presenting these results would expedite the translation and implementation process.

3. *Consider and address potential impact of the findings in the application.* Another important issue for applicants is to say explicitly in their applications what is the potential impact of their findings. The statement could include, for example, how many people could be affected, how the health care system would benefit from the findings of this research, or what policies or practices would be changed by this research project.
4. *Include in the application a clear plan for ongoing consultation with users.* Your communication with potential users shouldn't end with the submission of your application. Ongoing consultation between researchers and users will help ensure that the research continues to be timely and relevant. Your application should detail how you will communicate with users during the research process and during the implementation phase after the project is completed.
5. *Consult with Agency staff early as you develop the application.* AHRQ staff are available to help you prepare and submit a strong and timely application. We can help you understand our mission and research priorities as well as the application process. Consulting with AHRQ staff early and often will help you avoid delays and errors that could affect your chance of being funded. Contact information for relevant staff is included in every funding announcement.

THE BOTTOM LINE

AHRQ has funding opportunities in FY 2006 for both solicited and unsolicited research that supports our mission and research priorities. We welcome your input and applications so that AHRQ-funded research can “improve the quality, safety, efficiency and effectiveness of health care for all Americans.”

REFERENCES

- Budget Estimates for Appropriations Committees, Fiscal Year 2006. 2005. *Performance Budget Submission for Congressional Justification*. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD.
- Clancy, C. M. 2004. “AHRQ’s FY 2005 Budget Request: New Mission, New Vision.” *Health Services Research* 39 (3): xi–xviii. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6773.2004.00236.x.
- Clancy, C. M., J. R. Slutsky, and L. T. Patton. 2004. “Evidence-based Health Care 2004: AHRQ Moves Research to Translation and Implementation.” *Health Services Research* 39 (5): xv–xxiv. doi: 10.1111/j.1475-6773.2004.00286.x.