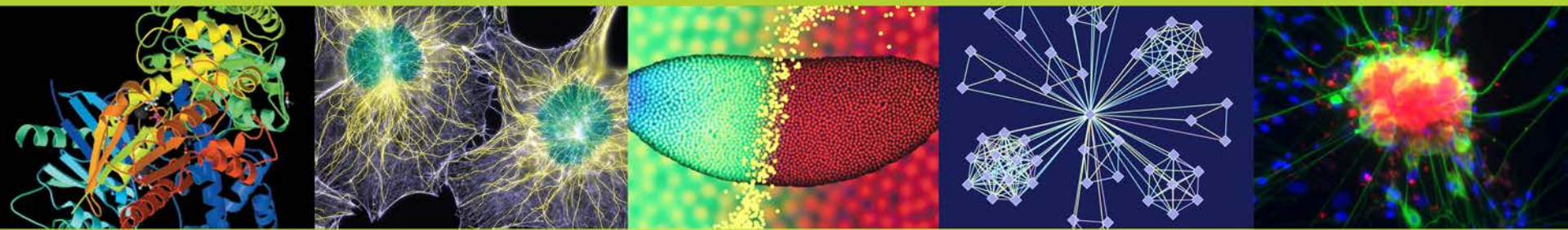# Information session on the AREA Program

Alexandra Ainsztein
Program Director
NIGMS

Overview

- Peer Review and Funding overview

- AREA Program specifics
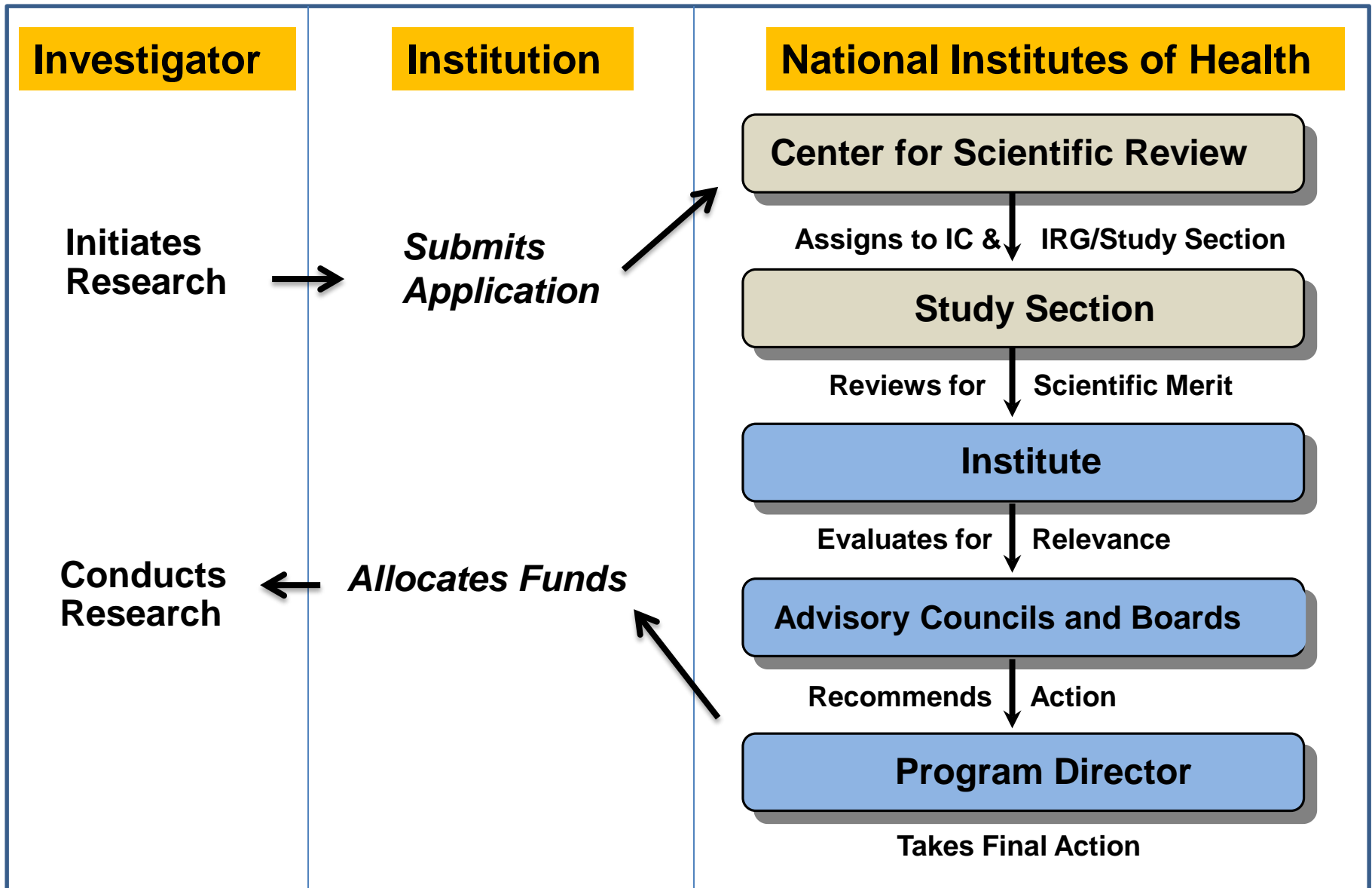
- Grantsmanship tips

27 Institutes and Centers (IC)

Each with a different:

– mission & priorities

– budget

– funding strategy

NIH Application Life Cycle

Investigator	Institution	National Institutes of Health

Center for Scientific Review

Assigns to IC & IRG/Study Section

Study Section

Reviews for Scientific Merit

Institute

Evaluates for Relevance

Advisory Councils and Boards

Recommends Action

Program Director

Takes Final Action

Initiates Research → *Submits Application*

Conducts Research ← *Allocates Funds*

NIH Peer Review

Two-tiered process

Initial peer review → Advisory Council

Initial Level of Peer Review

Study Section

- Members are scientific experts, covering a range of fields

- Managed by the Scientific Review Officer (SRO)

- Typically 3 assigned reviewers, panel discussion, priority scores are relative to others in the pile

- Product = Summary Statement

Second Level of Peer Review

NIH Institutes [Advisory](#) Council or Board

- Members are scientific experts and members of the lay public

- Run by the NIH Institute with primary assignment for funding consideration of an application

- Discussions focus on appeals, grievances, initiatives

- Product = allows Program staff to proceed with funding recommendations

NIH Application Life Cycle
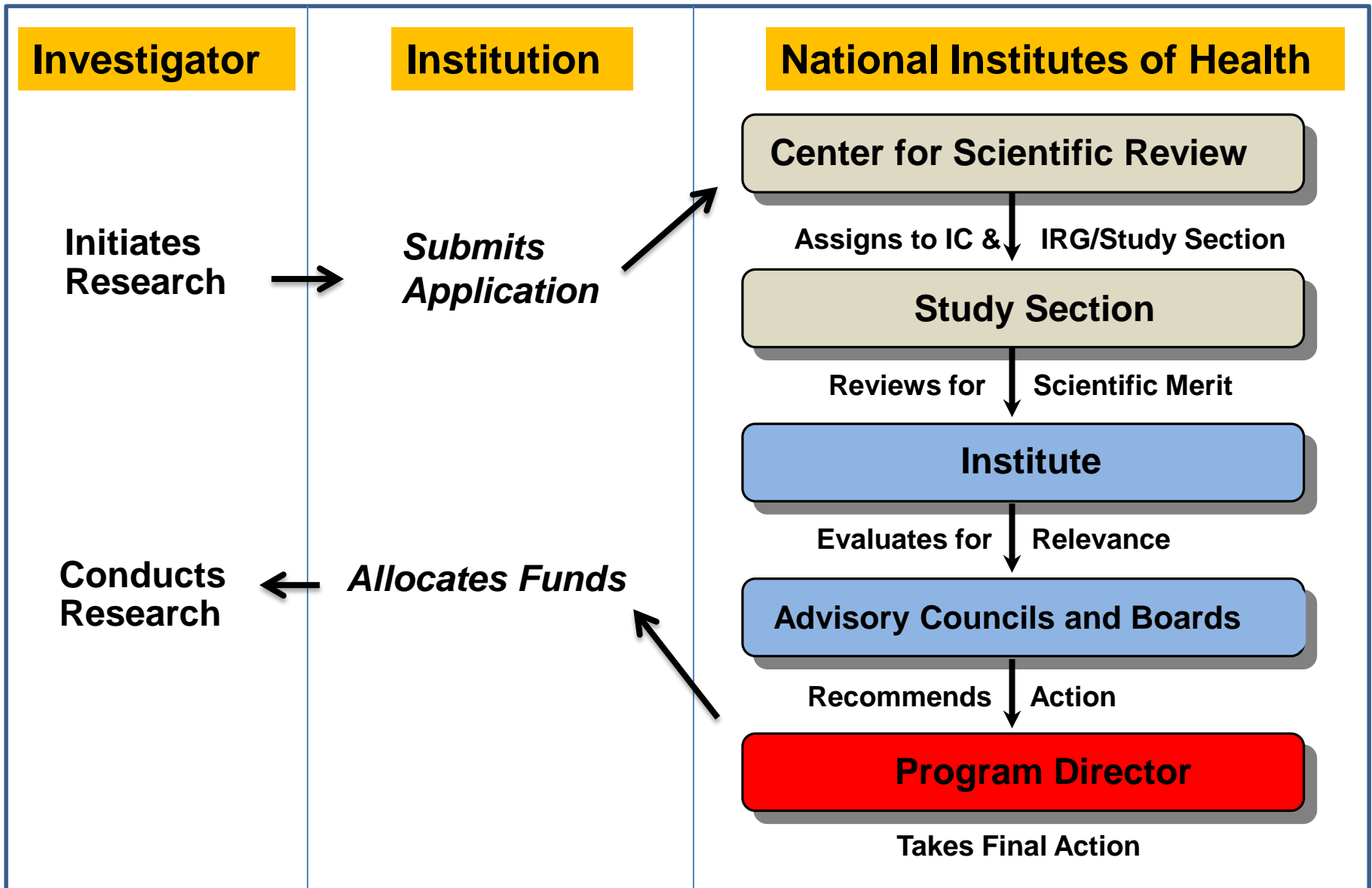
AREA Program - key features

- 3 year project period

- Up to $300,000 direct cost over 3 years

- Multiple PIs are allowed, if all eligible

- 12 page Research Strategy
  - Same criteria scoring as a R01, but different emphasis

- Grants are renewable

AREA program goals (PA-16-200)

1. Support meritorious research

2. Strengthen research environment of schools that have not been major recipients of NIH support

3. Expose undergraduate &/or graduate students in such environments to meritorious research
   - Exposure, not training
   - Goal = consider research careers
   - Metric ≠ students eventually get R01

R15 vs. R01

- Overall impact of R15 differs from R01
  - Make an important scientific contribution, not exert a sustained powerful influence
- Scope is very limited
  - Due to resources both in facilities and personnel
- Provide research opportunities to students
  - Absent from R01
- Strengthen research environment of the institution
  - Absent from R01

Research Strategy

- **Should touch each review criteria & program goals**

- Preliminary data not required
  - Reviewers can evaluate submitted data

- Required to demonstrate appropriateness of project and group, including students

- Description of involvement & supervision of students
  - Different than R01, R21

How students will be involved should be addressed

- Examples from PA-16-200
  - Perform & troubleshoot experiments
  - Present at (lab) meetings & (campus) conferences
  - (Help) design experiments
  - Collect & analyze data
  - Draft articles
  - Collaborative interactions

National Institute of General Medical Sciences

Student involvement should be meaningful

- Number of students
- Quality of student involvement
  - If included, meaningful involvement of undergrads
    - Vs. "there will also be a couple undergrads (with an unspecified or insignificant role)"
  - If included, meaningful involvement from grad students

AREA Program Resources

- Twitter @NIHR15
- Facebook NIH AREA Program
- Resources
  - https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area/resources.htm
- Main webpage
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area/area.htm
- Institutional Eligibility
  - https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area-ineligible.htm
- Institute/Center contacts
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/contacts/parent_R15.html
- AREA mailbox R151@mail.nih.gov

Where to Begin?

- Understand the NIH grants process including peer review

- Formulate your goals and Specific Aims first

- Line up advisors to read your application

- Utilize NIH Resources (SRO, Program Directors)

- **Know the Review Criteria**

Don't ignore Guide Notices

New emphasis in Peer Review

(NOT-OD-16-011)

- Premise

- Rigor & Reproducibility

- Sex as a Biological Variable

Factors that lower the priority score

- Lack of or weak impact

- Significance not obvious or weak

- Too ambitious, lacking focus

- Unclear or flawed hypothesis

- Applicant track record weak or lacking appropriate expertise

- Approach flawed

- Poor writing
- Superficial inclusion of students

More Tips

- Make sure your application is correctly assigned

  Study section and Institute

- Don't be discouraged…resubmit if needed

- Publish papers <u>before</u> you apply

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Misconceptions

- I should include lots of experimental details and data to convince the reviewers I can perform the experiments.

- I should write my applications for reviewers from my own specialized field.

- My application will be disadvantaged if it does not have direct clinical relevance.

Useful Tools

- **NIH RePORTer (research portfolio online reporting tool)**

- **NIH Program staff**

- **The review criteria section of a FOA**