Sharpening Your Focus:
Tips on Grant Proposal Preparation

An R21 is an exploratory/developmental research grant ($275,000 for up to two years) offered through the National Institutes of Health that funds novel scientific ideas, models systems, tools, targets, and technologies that have potential to substantially advance biomedical research.

Before deciding that this is the mechanism for you, here are some common misconceptions:

1. **I do not need any preliminary data.** *Probably false.* Preliminary data in R21s correlate to funding success. Despite what may be written in the Request for Applications (RFAs), reviewers often expect to see some data indicating the project is both feasible and will likely generate enough data to test the hypothesis, i.e., evidence that your project is going to work.
2. **I can use a R21 to generate all my data for a R01.** *Maybe not.*
In addition to #1 above, people often find that a two-year grant is not long enough to complete a project that yields enough data for publication or preliminary data for an R01 application.

To avoid a funding gap, you'll need to plan how to continue supporting your research if your R21 funds run out before a future R01 can begin.

3. **My status as a new investigator will allow me to get funded under a higher payline than experienced investigators.** *False.*
A R21 review won't benefit from the higher R01 payline for new (including early-stage) investigators.

4. **Obtaining a R21 will pave the way to a future R01.** *False.*
There is no evidence that R21s provide a path to an independent research career.

For more information, visit the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases [website](#).

For many new investigators, an R01 makes more sense, i.e., more liberal paylines, more years, and more funding to do the work.

However, it depends on your situation.

Despite bring high risk, if you think your study will yield high scientific or clinical payoffs, consider a R21.

View several R21 exemplars [here](#).