

Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Status

What is ESI?

NIH defines an **Early Stage Investigator (ESI)** as a Program Director / Principal Investigator (PD/PI) who has completed their terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training, whichever date is later, within the past 10 years and who has not previously competed successfully as PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award.

What is the benefit of having an ESI status?

ESI applications with meritorious scores will be prioritized for funding by the institute or center receiving the application.

How can I check if I have an ESI status?

Check the Education section of your eRA Commons profile. ESI status is determined automatically by functionality built into eRA Commons. The status is based on the investigator's record of receiving NIH grants and the completion date of his/her terminal research degree or the completion of post-graduate clinical training entered into the eRA Commons personal profile.

Where can I find out more?

You can find more information here:

<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm>

Related NEXUS posts: <https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/tag/esi/>

FAQs: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/faqs.htm>

Will I lose ESI status if...

YES

- It has been more than 10 years since my terminal research degree or end of post-graduate clinical training and I have not experienced situations that qualify for an ESI extension request. (See these [FAQs about ESI Extensions](#).)

MAYBE

- I am the PD/PI (or multi-PD/PI) on an NIH award.
 - Yes, if you successfully competed as a PD/PI for a substantial independent research award.
 - No, if you are the PD/PI of an award on our [list of smaller grants & awards that maintain ESI status](#).
- I am the PD/PI (or multi-PD/PI) on a multi-project award.
 - Yes, if you successfully competed as a PD/PI for the overall multi-project application.
 - No, if you led a component but were not the PD/PI of the overall application.

NO

- I'm a Co-Investigator on the grant. (NIH only recognizes senior/key with the role PD/PI as principal investigators.)
- I'm the PD/PI on a subaward or subcontract.
- I became the PD/PI due to a change of investigator action. (If you did not compete successfully as the PD/PI for a substantial NIH independent research award you won't lose status.)