

Using Small Data Portfolio Analysis to Answer Specific Questions about Funding Opportunity Announcements

Troy J. Zarcone, Jennifer A. Hobin

Office of Science Policy

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism

INTRODUCTION

NIH's Coordinating Committee for Bioethics Research & Training (CCBRT) is charged with reviewing and recommending bioethics research and educational opportunities for the intramural and extramural communities. To enhance bioethics research, NIH issued the following funding opportunity announcements (FOAs): Research on Ethical Issues in Biomedical, Social and Behavioral Research [PA11-180 (R01), PA11-181 (R03), PA11-182 (R21)] and Empirical Research on Ethical Issues Related to Central IRBs and Consent for Research Using Clinical Records and Data [RFAs OD-14-002 (R01) OD-15-002 (R01)]. On behalf of CCBRT, we assessed the performance of these FOAs relative to similar FOAs to determine if they generated sufficient applications and awards to warrant renewal.

METHOD

We looked at the number of grant applications and awards generated in response to PAs 11-180/181/182 and RFAs OD-14-002/15-002. We also looked at the distribution of these applications and awards across participating NIH institutes and centers and across the research priorities defined in the respective FOAs. We compared PAs 11-180/181/182 to similar PAs (R01, R03, R21, excluding parent announcements) and RFAs OD-14-002/15-002 to similar RFAs (R01) in terms of the number of applications, the application scores, and the total funds awarded during the same time periods. All analyses were conducted using NIH **Query View Report (QVR)** and **Microsoft Excel**.

RESULTS: Request for Applications (OD-14-002 & OD-15-002)

33 submissions total, 5 funded projects, 0 new investigators (no prior R01s)

Applications and Awards by IC

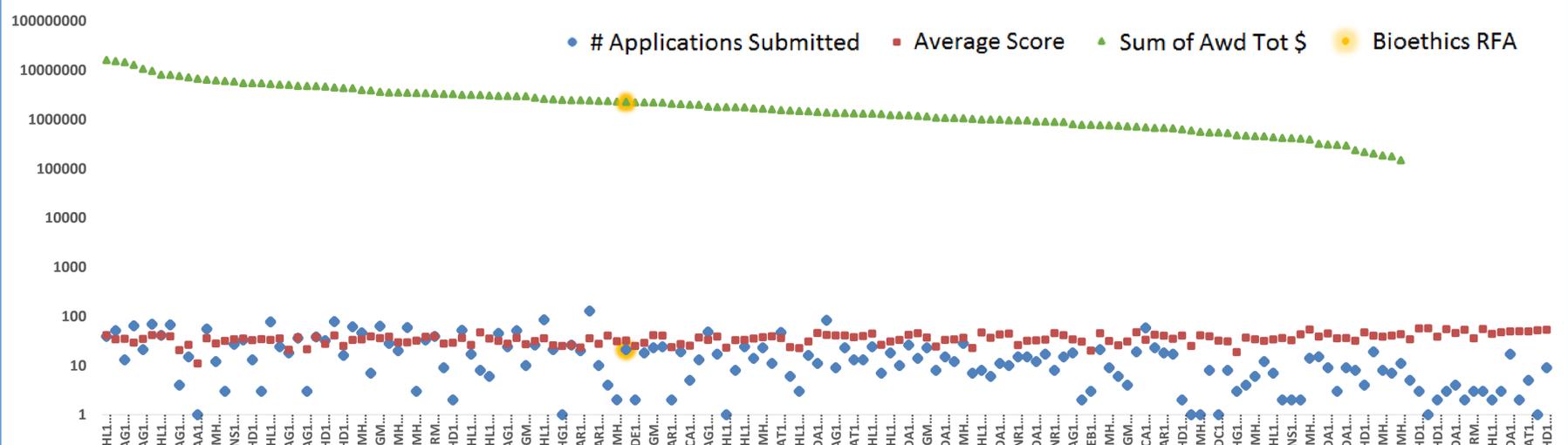
IC	2014		2015*
	Applications	Awards	Applications
NIAID	1		
NCI	6		3
NEI			1
NIGMS	10	1	
NICHD			6
NHGRI	1	1	2
NHLBI	1	1	
NLM	2	2	
Total	21	5	12

Applications and Awards by Priority Area

Priority Area	2014		2015*
	Applications	Awards	Applications
Central IRBs	10	3	3
Consent: Use of Records Data	11	2	9
Total	21	5	12

*2015 data are incomplete (partial year)

Bioethics RFA Compared to Similar RFAs



2014 NIH Request for Applications

Total Type 1 applications submitted, average scores of those applications, and the total funding awarded under each RFA issued in 2014 on a log scale.



RESULTS: Program Announcements (PA11-180/181/182)

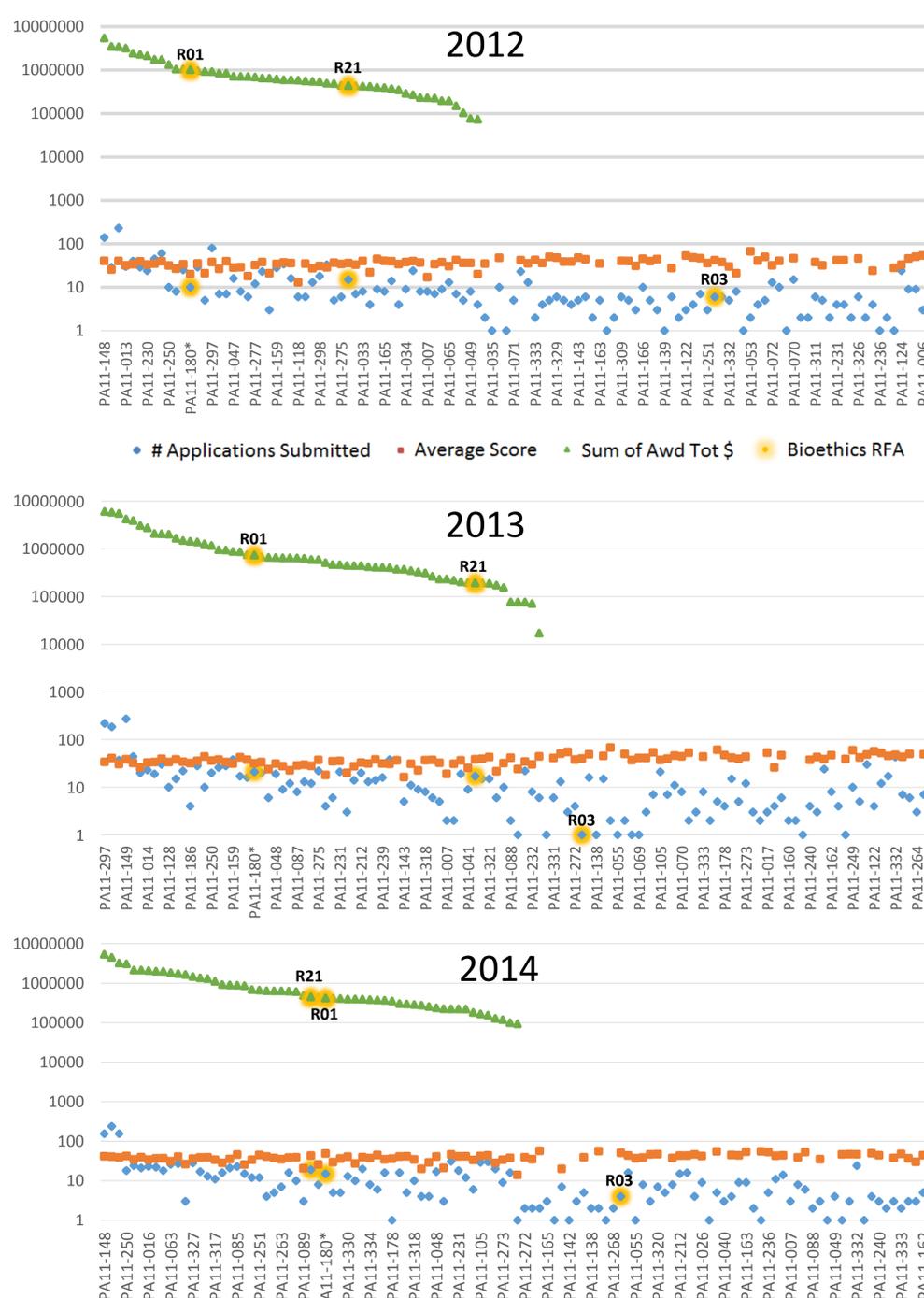
- 145 submissions to date
- 105 unique PIs
- 74 /145 projects unscored

- 14 projects funded
- 4 new investigators (no prior R01s)

Applications Received & (Funded)

IC	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	Total
NCI	5 (1)	15	11 (1)	12 (1)	3	46
NICHD	4	4 (1)	9	5 (1)	2	24
NHGRI	4 (1)	3 (1)	2		1	10
NIAID	2	4 (1)	3	1		10
NIA	2	4	3(1)	1		10
NINDS	3 (1)	2	1	2		8
NIMH	5			2	1	8
NIGMS	2 (1)	2 (1)	2	1	1	8
NINR		1	2	2		5
NIDA	1	1	2	1		5
NHLBI	1	2				3
NIEHS	1 (1)	2				3
NIBIB			2			2
NCCIH			1 (1)	1		2
NIDCR	1					1
Total	31 (5)	40 (4)	38 (3)	28 (2)	8	145

Bioethics PAs Compared to Similar PAs

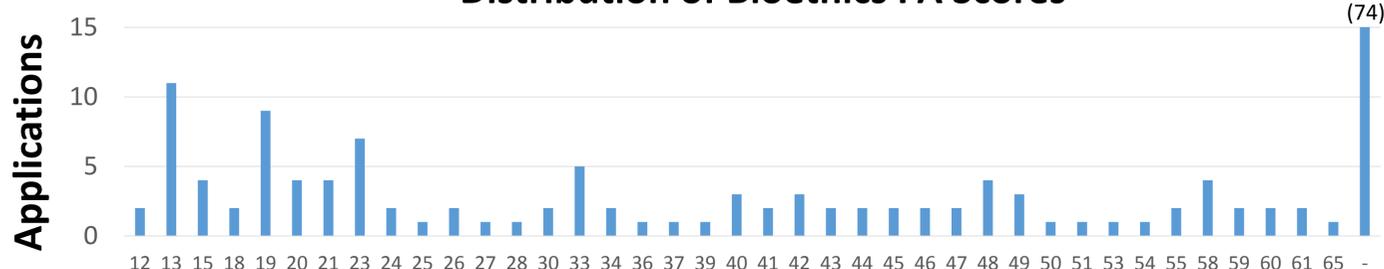


Applications and Awards by Priority Area

Priority Area	Applications	Awards
Research Study Design	49	5
Vulnerable Populations	36	1
Research Oversight	18	0
Specimen, Data, & Health Info.	17	3
Data Translation/Dissemination	12	2
Ethics of Emerging Tech.	7	1
Therapeutic Misconception	6	2
Total	145	14

NIH Program Announcements
Total Type 1 applications submitted, average scores of those applications, and the total funding awarded under each PA (log scale).

Distribution of Bioethics PA Scores



CONCLUSION

Funding only 14 of 145 bioethics PA applications might imply that the PAs were underperforming. However, comparing them to similar PAs issued during the same fiscal years suggests otherwise. The bioethics R01 and R21 PAs were comparable to similar PAs in terms of the number of applications submitted, awards funded, and average scores, suggesting that these mechanisms be renewed. The R03 generated fewer applications than the R01 and R21 and did not result in any funded awards, suggesting that this mechanism be modified or discontinued. The bioethics RFA generated fewer applications than the bioethics PAs, but did result in awards and performed comparably to similar RFAs. Awards were made in all but one topic area, suggesting a reappraisal of the under-performing topic. Comparing a particular FOA to similar FOAs in a given fiscal year may, therefore, provide a more accurate assessment of its performance than the absolute number of applications and awards that a FOA generates.