

W. Kimryn Rathmell, M.D., Ph.D.
Director, National Cancer Institute
9609 Medical Center Drive
Building 9609 MSC 9760
Bethesda, MD 20892-9760

December 28, 2023

Dear Dr. Rathmell,

The Endocrine Society appreciates the opportunity to comment on the National Cancer Institute's (NCI) support of early career, mentored cancer researchers and trainees. Founded in 1916, the Endocrine Society is the world's oldest, largest, and most active organization dedicated to research on hormones and the clinical practice of endocrinology. Our membership consists of over 18,000 scientists, physicians, educators, nurses, and students in more than 100 countries. Society members represent all basic, applied and clinical interests in endocrinology. Many of our members are funded by NCI to study hormone-sensitive cancers, endocrine neoplasias, and other research interests central to NCI's mission. Our members also serve as mentors and mentees on training grants, and we are enthusiastic about opportunities to improve the environment for researchers at the formative stages of their careers.

When considering the current funding mechanisms offered by NCI, our members identified several adjustments that could improve the development of a robust biomedical workforce. We note that scholars on international visas often struggle to obtain residency or citizenship and are therefore ineligible for most career development awards other than certain specific K awards. Dedicated support for more award programs that do not require residency or citizenship would help these invaluable researchers advance their careers while working toward residency or citizenship.

We also suggest that NCI explore opportunities to provide extended support for postdoctoral fellows who require a longer timeframe than originally anticipated. This can include scientific projects that encountered unanticipated challenges resulting in significant delays, or life-events such as the birth of a child that require extended leave. Finally, a more rigorous process for evaluating mentors, such as a more detailed section on progress of mentees in the RPPR could provide more focus on mentorship; this could be coupled to an emphasis on having mentors receive training on mentorship. As NCI develops new award mechanisms, the Institute could consider expanding those awards like the F99/K00 that are provided directly to the mentee, and not attached to the mentor.

We commend NCI for seeking new ways to foster a diverse cancer research workforce and point to the Endocrine Society's [Future Leaders Advancing Research in Endocrinology](#) (FLARE) as an example of a program that has successfully supported diverse cohorts of researchers to the benefit of our field as a whole. We encourage NCI to consider supporting similar cohorts of researchers, with dedicated programming that facilitates networking among themselves and with mentors. To ensure



that these cohorts are prepared for research in academic and other settings, educational programming could include topics like financial consulting for running a lab, i.e., how to manage a budget, interface with research administration, and other aspects of running the lab as a business; or leadership training involving speaking to different audiences and engaging/working with individuals who are junior or senior to you at your institution.

In conclusion, we commend NCI for examining its own approaches in relation to the Advisory Committee to the Director's Working Group on Re-Envisioning Postdoctoral Training. The Endocrine Society is eager to help maintain a robust pipeline of biomedical researchers at all career stages, and we look forward to working with NIH and NCI following from the Working Group report. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Joe Laakso, PhD, Director of Science Policy at jlaakso@endocrine.org.

Sincerely,

Stephen R. Hammes, M.D., Ph.D.,
President
Endocrine Society