

## **FACULTY INSTITUTIONAL RECRUITMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE TRANSFORMATION (FIRST)** **Proposed Common Fund Initiative**

Common Fund will provide up to \$241 million over 9 years for this initiative.

The overall program goal of the proposed Common Fund (CF) Faculty Institutional Recruitment for Sustainable Transformation (FIRST) is to create cultures of inclusive excellence at NIH-funded institutions by implementing a set of well-integrated systems-based strategies and evaluating their impact on prespecified metrics of institutional culture, inclusion, and diversity. [Reports on faculty cluster hiring](#) at academic institutions suggest that a cohort model [might be an effective strategy](#) for enhancing diversity and inclusion, but the approach has not been tested rigorously. Moreover, there is little evidence on how this strategy performs within a larger, integrated trans-institutional approach to address diversity and inclusion. FIRST will invite applicant institutions to choose one of two RFAs (see diagram). **Initiative 1** (RFA 1): Cohort model (to recruit, mentor, and advance faculty amid a set of integrated, systems-level approaches at the institutional level). An independent Data Coordination and Evaluation Center (DCEC, **Initiative 2**, RFA 2) will collect and analyze data to assess the impact of **RFA 1** on pre-defined metrics of institutional culture, diversity, and inclusion. Analyses will include comparison of baseline metrics to annual measures for 5 years after implementation: a) within each Initiative 1 institution and b) in Initiative 1 institutions combined.

**Cohort model.** We envisage funding 12 institutions, each recruiting up to 10 faculty, generating a total of up to 120 faculty during the initial 5 years of FIRST (year 1 is launch year). The national faculty representation gap (gender and race/ethnicity) is driven in large part by institutional cultures that lack necessary elements of diversity and inclusion, sending a message to certain groups that they don't belong in science. The cohort model, mimicking the NIH intramural research program's [Distinguished Scholars Program](#), aims to transform culture at NIH-funded extramural institutions through recruitment of a critical mass of investigators across an institution who have a demonstrated commitment to diversity and inclusion. Previous individual-based approaches to enhance diversity (e.g., fellowships, supplements) have been important but only marginally effective on a large scale. Cohort models such as [UMBC's Meyerhoff program](#) have been highly successful in enhancing diversity among trainees who go on to receive PhDs. The proposed cohort-based program will determine if the cohort approach is also effective for biomedical research faculty, as suggested by limited data in the literature, as noted above.

**Integrated systems-based strategies.** Placing a cohort within a culture of inclusion and support is paramount to a path for faculty retention and career success. Faculty who represent diverse groups often have a sense of not belonging and isolation which impairs their motivation and their career advancement. Therefore we are funding integrated systems-based strategies that creates an institutional culture that enhances the inclusive culture for all faculty. As institutions aspire to deliver on their goals and mission for diversity and inclusion, many of them focus on development of a strategic diversity plan as necessary and sufficient to accomplish organizational change. [Such plans](#) describe implicit-bias training, recruitment policies, work/life integration, mentoring programs, and an array of other goals and activities. [Many of these](#) have been shown to be effective on a small scale, but their impact on institutional culture is unknown. A systematic approach to identify, adapt, and implement the most promising and effective practices is necessary to create institutional culture change on a national scale.