Funding watch

Cash injection for US research

In an era of global economic downturn, scientific research in the United States has received a much needed boost with the receipt of approximately US\$20 billion in investment money. The money has been sanctioned by the new US government through [The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](#) (also known as the stimulus package) and must be spent in 2 years.

Of this investment, the [National Institutes of Health](#) (NIH) has received \$10.4 billion for distribution. According to Stephen Prescott, President of the Oklahoma Medical Research Foundation, “the help couldn’t come at a more crucial time” ([The Journal Record](#), 1 Apr 2009).

Because the NIH needs to spend the money quickly, the bulk will go to previously submitted grant proposals that narrowly missed getting funded, to infrastructure and equipment and to help supplement existing work ([The Boston Globe](#), 23 Mar 2009).

In addition, there are some opportunities for scientists to apply for grants for new research within ‘[Challenge Topics](#)’ that “focus on specific knowledge gaps, scientific opportunities, new technologies, data generation, or research methods that would benefit from an influx of funds to quickly advance the area in significant ways”, according to the [NIH website](#).

However, these grants will receive only a small sliver of the funding pie (less than 1% of the NIH stimulus funds). The motivation behind this distribution “reflects the desire to establish a realistic number of sustainable new faculty positions rather than set off a feeding frenzy”, says Jeremy Berg, Director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences ([Science Careers](#), 3 Apr 2009).

But given the recent shortfall in research funds in the United States, a frenzy of a different kind is now sweeping across laboratories to get the expected ‘tsunami’ of grant applications submitted by the deadlines.

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