NIH K Awards: Clarification of Level of Effort and NIH Policy on Compensation and Salary Supplementation

Supplementation

NIH allows salary supplementation of the effort committed to NIH K Awards as follows:

For the effort directly committed to the NIH K Award, salary supplementation must be from non-Federal sources and must not require extra duties or responsibilities that would interfere with the goals of the NIH K Award.

Example: Postdoc A devotes 75% effort to an NIH K Award. The department may supplement the NIH K Award salary contribution from non-Federal discretionary funds to bring Postdoc A’s salary up to the union scale.

Compensation

The updated policy for compensation of NIH K Awardees follows:

For effort not directly committed to the NIH K Award, recipients may devote their remaining effort (if available) with compensation from Federal or non-Federal sources as PD/PI, Lead, or another role (e.g. co-investigator) on other supporting grant(s) as long as the specific aims differ from those of the NIH K Award (i.e. no scientific overlap ? K Awardee must verify with PO of K Award).

Example 1-COMPENSATION: Postdoc B devotes 85% effort to a K Award and will devote his/her remaining uncommitted 15% effort with salary to PI Z’s R01, performing work that does not support the specific aims of the NIH K Award ?must verify this action with PO of respective Awards.
What if the work on PI Z's R01 supports the specific aims of the NIH K Award (i.e. there is scientific overlap)?

Example-COMPLEMENTARY EFFORT: If Postdoc B is devoting 85% effort to a NIH K Award and s/he is asked to perform work on another PI's R01 at 25% that overlaps with the work performed on NIH K Award. Postdoc B's effort on the R01 is subsumed by their effort on the NIH K Award and Postdoc B will devote 25% to the R01 without compensation. This activity must be verified with the PO of respective Awards. Complementary effort is not tracked as cost sharing.

What if Postdoc B is applying for his/her own R01?

Example 2-COMPENSATION: Postdoc B devotes 85% effort to an NIH K Award and can commit the remaining 15% available uncommitted effort with salary on his/her own R01.
application performing work that does not support the specific aims of the NIH K Award? this action must be verified with PO of respective Awards.

Example-CONCURRENT SUPPORT: If Postdoc B devotes 85% effort to an NIH Mentored K Award and wants to commit 25% effort to their own R01 application, s/he can reduce effort on the K Award (no lower than 50%) during the last 2 years of the K Award to accommodate their effort as PD/PI of the R01. This action must be verified with the PO of respective awards. See NOT-OD-18-157 for updated details on concurrent support.
What if the K Awardee devotes 85% effort to their NIH K Award and wants to commit 25% effort to his/her own R01 but does not want to decrease their effort on their K Award below 75%?

Example—COMPENSATION & CONCURRENT SUPPORT: Postdoc C can devote 25% to their own R01 during the last 2 years on their NIH Mentored K Award, as long as the work on their R01 does not support the aims of the K Award and the PO of the K Award verifies there is no overlap. Postdoc C can use their remaining uncommitted 15% effort and reduce their effort on the K Award to 75% (no less than 50%) during the last 2 years of the K Award. This action should be verified with the PO of respective awards. See NOT-OD-18-157 for updated details on concurrent support.

RESOURCES:
NIH Grants Policy Statement 12.3.6
NOT-OD-17-094
NOT-OD-18-157
NIH Extramural NEXUS: Clarifying Percent Effort and Support for K Awardees
NIH Research Training and Career Development