



National Eye Institute
<http://www.nei.nih.gov>

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NIH LAUNCHES CONTEST FOR AUDACIOUS GOALS IN VISION RESEARCH

The National Eye Institute (NEI), a part of the National Institutes of Health, is offering \$3,000 awards to as many as 20 contestants who submit the most compelling one-page ideas to advance vision science. The submission deadline for the Challenge to Identify Audacious Goals in Vision Research and Blindness Rehabilitation is Nov. 12, 2012. Winning contestants will be invited to present, discuss, and refine their ideas at the NEI Audacious Goals Development Meeting, Feb. 24-26, 2013, in Washington D.C.

Since its creation in 1968, NEI has set the national vision research agenda through strategic planning. "The Audacious Goals Challenge is a new tool in NEI strategic planning that aims to gather ideas from across the scientific spectrum to forge new approaches to persistent challenges in vision research," said NEI Director Paul A. Sieving, M.D., Ph.D. "Whether basic, translational, or clinical, a goal is audacious if it fundamentally changes research or vision care by closing critical knowledge gaps, opening developmental bottlenecks, or providing key elements to translate scientific discoveries into clinical applications."

The past decade, beginning with the sequencing of the human genome, has yielded unprecedented gains in knowledge and tools to conduct research. NEI strategic planning has helped keep vision research at the forefront of medical science. In 2005, vision researchers were among the first scientists to employ new tools from the Human Genome Project when several groups identified genetic factors for age-related macular degeneration, the most common cause of legal blindness among older Americans. In 2008, vision researchers demonstrated the feasibility of human gene therapy by successfully treating patients with an inherited form of blindness called Leber congenital amaurosis. And in 2011, researchers created an eyeball using mouse embryonic stem cells.

"Opportunities for scientific progress have never been greater, making strategic planning more critical," said Sieving. "By casting the widest net possible, the Audacious Goals Challenge will enhance our strategic planning with perspectives from people who have not traditionally been a part of the NEI planning process. Output from the challenge will help set priorities and coordinate research efforts."

The Audacious Goals Challenge seeks ideas that support the NEI mission-to conduct and support research and other programs aimed at reducing the burden of vision disorders and disease worldwide. NEI encourages submissions from people in the private, government, and nonprofit sectors, including scientists, engineers, health care providers, inventors, and entrepreneurs, as well as the general public.

Challenge contestants should consult Vision Research: Needs, Gaps, and Opportunities, NEI's most recent compilation of panel reports that describes progress, current needs, and opportunities in six program areas: retinal diseases; corneal diseases; lens and cataract; glaucoma and optic neuropathies; strabismus, amblyopia, and visual processing; and low vision and blindness rehabilitation. The panel reports, issued every five to seven years, represent the work of hundreds of scientists, clinicians, and stakeholders involved in vision research. Vision Research: Needs, Gaps, and Opportunities is available at <http://www.nei.nih.gov/strategicplanning/>.

Submissions must address why the audacious goal is important, how to achieve the goal, and how realization of the goal will impact the NEI mission. Submissions are limited to 4,000 characters including spaces (about one page), and must comply with rules outlined at <http://www.nei.nih.gov/challenge>.

Entries will be de-identified and judged by NIH experts. Criteria include relevance to the NEI mission; whether the goal is bold, daring, unconventional, or exceptionally innovative; and feasibility. Goals should be broad in scope and attainable in about 10 years.

The NEI Audacious Goals Challenge is being conducted under the America Creating Opportunities to Meaningfully Promote Excellence in Technology, Education, and Science (COMPETES) Reauthorization Act of 2010.

The National Eye Institute, part of the National Institutes of Health, leads the federal government's research on the visual system and eye diseases. NEI supports basic and clinical science programs that result in the development of sight-saving treatments. For more information, visit <http://www.nei.nih.gov>.



About the National Institutes of Health (NIH): NIH, the nation's medical research agency, includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. NIH is the primary federal agency conducting and supporting basic, clinical, and translational medical research, and is investigating the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.

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