

Member Societies

The American Physiological Society
American Society for Biochemistry and
Molecular Biology
American Society for Pharmacology and
Experimental Therapeutics
American Society for Investigative
Pathology
American Society for Nutrition
The American Association of
Immunologists
American Association of Anatomists
The Protein Society
Society for Developmental Biology
American Peptide Society
Association of Biomolecular Resource
Facilities
The American Society for Bone and
Mineral Research
American Society for Clinical
Investigation
Society for the Study of Reproduction
Teratology Society
The Endocrine Society
The American Society of Human
Genetics
Society for Gynecologic Investigation
Environmental Mutagen Society
International Society for
Computational Biology
American College of Sports Medicine
Biomedical Engineering Society

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Gregory K. Farber, Ph.D.
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BY ELECTRONIC MAIL TO: ncrrcorefi@mail.nih.gov

Re: Notice Number: NOT-RR-09-003, Request for Information (RFI): Improving
Core Facilities

Dear Dr. Farber,

The Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the Request for Information on improving core facilities (NOT-RR-09-003). FASEB comprises 22 scientific societies involved in basic, translational, and clinical research and represents more than 80,000 scientists, making it the largest coalition of biomedical research associations in the United States. The mission of FASEB is to advance biological science through collaborative advocacy for research policies that promote scientific progress and education and lead to improvements in human health. FASEB looks forward to working with the National Center for Research Resources in the development and implementation of improvements to the core resources program.

FASEB society members are engaged in research in a range of disciplines across the nation and include current, former and potential users of core facilities as well as scientists working in resource and research biotechnology laboratories in government, academia, research, industry and commercial settings. It is our position that core facilities are valuable and essential to biomedical research, and as such ought to enjoy appropriate and sustained support. In addition, NIH and NCRR should assure greater access to core facilities by broadly disseminating information to scientists about how to utilize these resources. We thank you for the opportunity to provide the enclosed additional input from our community on improving core facilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard B. Marchase". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard B. Marchase, Ph.D., FASEB President

Enclosure: FASEB comments on RFI "Improving Core Facilities"

Enclosure: Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB) comments on RFI “Improving Core Facilities,” Notice Number: NOT-RR-09-003

1) Describe your interest in core facilities

Please describe how you are associated with core facilities. Such roles might include (1) current users of core facilities, (2) former users of core facilities, (3) potential users of core facilities, (4) managers of core facilities, (5) principal investigators on NIH awards that support core facilities, (6) institutional officials that oversee core facilities, (7) organizations interested in clinical or biomedical research, or (8) other interested parties. If you are a current user of core facilities, please indicate the type of facility that you use. If you are a previous user of core facilities, please indicate what sort of facility you used and why you no longer use the facility. If you are a potential user of core facilities, please indicate what sort of core facilities would be helpful in supporting your research.

FASEB’s 22 member societies include more than 80,000 scientists in a wide array of biomedical fields, including basic and clinical researchers, administrators and others. These include current, former and potential users of core facilities, as well as managers and employees of core facilities. FASEB itself is a nonprofit advocacy organization interested in all aspects of biomedical research. Our member society scientists use core facilities and benefit by the efficiencies of scale or by access to expensive or state-of-the-art technology platforms that otherwise would not be available to their NIH-funded research programs.

2) Describe how you access core facilities

Please describe your ability to access core facilities that would be helpful in supporting your research. Please indicate how you locate needed cores, if a national registry of cores would be useful to you, if your experiments would allow you to travel to another institution to use a core facility. If you have discovered institutional barriers either within your organization or on a regional basis, please describe the details. Comments concerning whether some types of cores are more amenable to sharing would be welcome.

FASEB society members access core facilities in a range of ways. Some scientists have access to extensive resources hosted by their home institutions, while others are located in more remote areas or at smaller institutions, with limited access to core facilities. FASEB supports a national registry of cores and, more broadly, the greater availability of information regarding core facilities. Ideally, this registry should include information about all NIH-funded cores, including those funded outside of NCRR.

Specifically, NIH should actively promote (e.g. on the NCRR website) information on the location, capabilities, and research priorities of cores as well as fee structure, who can gain access, and how to negotiate access. NIH should disseminate this information in a manner that reaches as many scientists as possible. This transparency would enable scientists to better understand the resources available to them, maximize the utilization of NIH-funded core facilities and improve the overall quality of the biomedical research enterprise.

3) Value of core facilities

If you are a current or past user of core facilities, describe how your use of the facility

improved your ability to perform research, or failed to do so. Describe any examples where the core facility enhanced collaborations with other scientists either within or complementary to your expertise. Describe any examples where the core facility was significantly involved in training users and whether such training was valuable. If appropriate, please provide specific examples of multi-disciplinary or interdisciplinary interactions that arose through the use of core facilities and resulted in publications.

FASEB supports core facilities as an essential element of the research enterprise, particularly where the facilities allow for efficient and collaborative use of shared equipment. In addition to the facilities themselves, the experience and skill of the core facility personnel are integral to the success of a facility.

Examples from individual members include: access to protein micro-sequencing, cell culture and advanced proteomic technologies, ability to perform crucial confocal microscopy experiments, exponential increases in the diffusion of mouse transgenic and ES cell research and high-throughput genomic screens (e.g. RNAi technology applications to seek new regulators of signaling and cancer-related processes).

4) NIH policies

Indicate whether NIH policies or the terms and conditions for particular awards make it difficult to fully utilize core facilities.

NIH could improve utilization of cores by increasing transparency and broadly disseminating information about cores and how to access them (see #2 above). In addition to initial funding, it is critical to maintain the investment in equipment and retain skilled and experienced personnel. Finally, NIH should reduce or remove barriers to access by investigators working outside the core's home institution by providing fee subsidies for investigators from outside institutions. Under the present system, many investigators working outside major research centers are unable to access needed resources at their home institutions and encounter access and fee barriers when trying to utilize resources at other institutions, thus impeding their research.

5) Core consolidation

In instances where there are multiple similar cores at a particular institution or in a small geographic area, describe ways that NIH could aid in core consolidation. In those instances where an institution has successfully consolidated cores, describe best practices or lessons learned that can be shared. In those instances where an institution has unsuccessfully attempted to consolidate cores, describe the reasons that the attempt failed.

FASEB supports the consolidation of cores into regional facilities where services or equipment are redundant within a given geographic area. NIH should consider ways to

encourage consolidation in a manner that allows the most effective and well-utilized cores to remain, including a competitive grant system that provides funding to the core facility in a region best able to demonstrate productivity and excellence.

In certain cases where geographical proximity of a scientist to a core facility is not necessary (i.e. where specimens, etc. may be shipped without damage), core facilities of that type need not be geographically distributed. However, in instances where a scientist must be geographically close to a core facility in order to utilize it, and demand is sufficient, NIH should encourage the development of geographically distributed regional cores. For these purposes, the size of a region should be determined by the density of NIH-funded researchers, which may differ across the country. This type of national planning will allow all NIH-funded scientists maximum access to the range of resources provided by core facilities.

6) Issues associated with Funding Opportunity Announcements

Describe any issues involving NIH funding opportunity announcements (FOAs) that encourage the creation of new cores that ultimately are not fully utilized. If such issues exist, list suggestions you have for altering FOAs that propose core facilities. Indicate whether the NIH peer review process for applications with core facilities encourages the creation of new cores rather than the use/expansion of existing cores.

FASEB supports the NIH peer review process with regards to core facilities. FOA's should be announced with enough lead time prior to deadline to allow the broadest and most effective competition in responses.

7) Management plans for core facilities

Describe any management plans that you are aware of that encourage full utilization of core facilities. Such plans might be concerned with institutional oversight, cost recovery schemes, and access to facilities. If available, please provide links to information about the core facility using the plan you describe. Describe any management plans (such as cost sharing requirements) that discourage the use of core facilities. In either case, indicate whether the management plans are imposed by the core facility, by the academic department, by the host institution, or by a funding agency.

FASEB supports management plans that maximize the utilization of core facilities and promote broad access without placing undue burden on the host institution.

8) Other issues

Describe any other issues involving core facilities that would improve them.

FASEB supports appropriate, ongoing funding of core facilities in order to maintain equipment and retain skilled and experienced personnel. This funding will bring the highest return on NIH's initial investment in the facility and maximize each facility's contribution to the research enterprise.