

Frequently Asked Questions

Maximizing the Scientific Value of Data Generated by the Environmental influences on Child Health Outcomes (ECHO) Program, RFA-OD-27-006, RFA-OD-27-008

Important Notice:

- Both of these Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) indicate that the ECHO data are stored on the NICHD DASH repository. Due to administrative changes, the data will be stored on a different NIH repository instead. The information in the NOFOs about DASH is no longer accurate.
- For information on requesting access to the data, please visit <https://echochildren.org/> and click on the **Information for Researchers** tab at the top of the page.

1. Applications are due either on October 15 or December 2 of this year; where should I be in my training program trajectory to apply this year?

R36 dissertation grant: You should be working soon on your dissertation proposal. You must have an approved dissertation proposal by the time of award, expected to be in June 2027.

F32 fellowship award: You should be approaching completion of your doctoral degree or should have recently completed it. If you already have NIH postdoctoral support, individuals may only receive up to 3 years of aggregate F32 support at the postdoctoral level. Before the NIH can activate a fellowship award, the individual must have received a doctoral degree from an accredited institution.

2. How can I prepare my application if the data are not yet accessible to preview for planning analyses?

The ECHO Cohort Data Analysis Center provides a search tool called **PlatIPUS** for exploring the publicly available ECHO Cohort data potentially available for a dissertation or a postdoc project.

Available deidentified data include:

- Demographic information including race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and education
- Early development data including growth, milestones, physical activity, and sleep
- Environmental exposure data including physical, chemical, psychosocial, and natural and built environments
- Pregnancy and birth information including maternal diet and physical activity, maternal smoking during pregnancy, weight gain, and delivery outcomes
- Data related to public health crises including surveys on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic

You can request access to PlatIPUS at this link: <https://echoportal.org/Account/Register> .

With PlatIPUS you will be able to explore the available data in order to specify the analyses for your application.

We anticipate that data will be available in August.

3. Do I have to collect my own data for my dissertation?

No, the R36 dissertation grant is to support students whose dissertation committee have approved analyses of the publicly accessible ECHO data to meet the requirements for their degree. Candidates must have an approved dissertation proposal (by the time of award). Your proposed research plan should meet the standards of rigor and quality for dissertation research at your doctoral institution and enhance your potential as a productive child health researcher.

4. What is meant by “Institutional Environment”?

Describe the scientific environment (your university), your role in a well-established research program (your department), and your work under the guidance of a successful mentor. Provide details about opportunities for intellectual interactions with other researchers including courses, seminars, and journal clubs. Include details about facilities and resources available for both your scientific research, but also career enhancement.

5. What is the “Description of Candidate’s Contribution to Program Goals” in the F32 application?

The sponsoring institution must provide a document on institutional letterhead that explains how the candidate’s institution and own participation will complement the goals of the fellowship program to promote diversity in health-related research. The letter must be dated and signed by an institutional official. In most cases, this will be the dean or the chairman of the department. The signature must appear over the signer’s name and title at the end of the statement.

6. What registrations do students need for a grant application?

The Principal Investigator (PI) must register in [eRA Commons](#) and be assigned the PI role prior to submission of a grant application.

7. How are the letters linked to an application, and what happens to letters that are not linked to applications?

The NIH system links reference letters to an application using the Notice of Funding Opportunity number and the Commons User ID of the applicant, as supplied by the referee. It is very important that the referee provide accurate information: if this information is provided incorrectly, the reference letter will not be linked to the application.

8. Can my referees send reference letters via email directly to NIH?

No. Reference letters for these grant applications must be submitted through eRA Commons.

9. What is the deadline for referees to send their reference letters?

Referees must submit reference letters by 5 PM local time of the applicant organization on the application due date (same deadline as the application). Reference letters can be submitted as of the NOFO posted date, regardless of when the application is submitted. If the PI does not already have an eRA Commons account, he/she should register in eRA Commons through the organization’s Signing Official or Account Administrator. If the PI already has an eRA Commons account, he/she should ensure their account is affiliated with the applicant organization.

10. What will these award budgets include?

R36 grants

- Salary consistent with the current fiscal year National Research Service Award (NRSA) predoctoral stipend level (<https://grants.nih.gov/training/nrsa.htm#policy>)
- Up to \$15,000 for additional expenses such as fringe benefits in accordance with institutional policies including health insurance for self and family members, travel to scientific meetings, and dissertation research costs
- *Excluded:* tuition and fees, equipment, dissertation defense or deposit fees, membership fees, research assistant support, and faculty or consultant effort

F32 fellowship awards

- Awards provide stipends as a subsistence allowance to help defray living expenses during the research and clinical training experiences. Stipend levels, as well as funding amounts for tuition and fees and the institutional allowance, are announced annually in the *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*.
- Fellowship awards will contribute to the combined cost of tuition and fees at the rate in place at the time of award.
- Applicants can request an institutional allowance to help defray the cost of fellowship expenses such as health insurance, research supplies, equipment, books, and travel to scientific meetings.

11. Do I need Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval for research based exclusively on publicly accessible ECHO data?

No, additional IRB approval beyond what covered the active data collection by ECHO investigators is not needed.

12. Is the research that I would do with publicly accessible ECHO data considered human subjects research?

No, the publicly accessible data on DASH have been deidentified and fully prepared for public use in secondary data analyses.

13. Does the 2023 Data Management & Sharing (DMS) Policy apply to these R36 and F32 awards?

No. The DMS Policy does not apply to awards for dissertation and fellowship programs.

14. Is there eligibility for international students?

By the time of award, the individual must be a citizen or a non-citizen national of the U.S. or have been lawfully admitted for permanent residence.

15. How can I find out what ECHO investigators have already published with ECHO Program data?

You can see all prior published work based on ECHO data on the following web site. You can search by keywords to target specific areas. <https://echochildren.org/echo-program-publications/>

16. Are there restrictions on what I could do with and how I could use the publicly accessible ECHO data?

Yes, prior to accessing the data, you will sign a Data Use Agreement that stipulates terms and conditions of use. Among other restrictions detailed in the agreement, there are restrictions on sharing data with others, conducting analyses that are not part of your research plan, and on attempting to identify individual participants.