



NCRR: A Catalyst
for Discovery

NCRR Fact Sheet

Science Education Partnership Awards (SEPA) are designed to improve life science literacy throughout the nation. These grant awards, provided by the Division of Clinical Research of the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR), bring together biomedical and behavioral researchers, educators, community groups, and other interested organizations. The groups then work as partners to create and disseminate programs that give K-12 students and teachers and the general public a better understanding of life sciences.

Researchers who study human disease and illness can make major contributions to programs that educate students and the public by passing on their knowledge, and also demonstrating the excitement of carrying out health-related research. SEPA funding provides researchers the vehicle for conveying both their knowledge and appreciation of scientific accomplishments.

SEPA projects are designed to stimulate K-12 students' interests in life sciences so as to encourage them to pursue college degrees in related fields of study. Eventually, these students may choose careers as scientists, engineers, and technicians and help to meet our nation's future workforce needs in biomedical research.

In addition to targeting students, SEPA partnerships also develop projects that educate the general public about health

and disease. Improving society's literacy in the health sciences helps people make better lifestyle choices as new science advances emerge.

The types of activities that are supported by SEPA grants may include traveling exhibits and mobile science laboratories; instruction in current health science concepts for present and prospective pre-college teachers; development of innovative curricula involving state-of-the art technologies, such as interactive Web sites and CD-ROM resources; and projects that link biomedical scientists with local community and school programs involving teachers and parents. Many of the projects offer "hands-on" and "inquiry-based" learning opportunities to give students direct contact with scientific research.

SEPA-supported projects may focus on improving public understanding of molecu-

The National Center for Research Resources ensures that essential tools and research resources are readily available to NIH-supported investigators nationwide. NCRR-supported resources—a comprehensive range of human, animal, technological, and more—enable biomedical research advances.

lar biology, molecular genetics, immunology, neuroscience, and bioinformatics, to name a few areas. Understanding behavioral science can include such subjects as health promotion and prevention of disease, such as AIDS; and ethical issues relating to genetic engineering, environmental health, and responsible use of animals and humans in research, for example.

In recent years, NCRR also has provided funding to science centers and museums across the country, sometimes in partnership with academic institutions. The museums and centers use their information networks to develop stationary and traveling exhibits on topics ranging from fundamental biology to clinical research. These partnerships ensure that cutting-edge, science education projects are innovative and broadly distributed to students and the public.

SEPA grants support two phases of the science-education projects. In Phase I, the partnership develops and evaluates biomedical and/or behavioral science education models that are based on health-related research. In Phase II, the partnership develops effective strategies and broadly disseminates established, successful, and innovative biomedical and/or behavioral science education models. In Phase II the partnership must also plan for continuation of the project once SEPA support ends.

U.S. organizations with scientific and/or educational missions are eligible for SEPA funding. These entities include colleges and universities, state and local education agencies, biomedically-oriented professional societies, research laboratories, private foundations and

other public and private education-related organizations, for profit or not-for-profit.

While SEPA projects must represent new activities and focus on health-related science, coordination with existing science education improvement programs, such as those funded by the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the Department of Education, and others are encouraged.

Additional eligibility criteria, guidelines, application procedures, and evaluation criteria for SEPA grants are described in the Clinical Research Program Guidelines available through the NCRR Web site: <http://www.ncrr.nih.gov>. A listing of the SEPA grantee organizations and descriptions of their projects also are available on this Web site.

Prepared: April 2002

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Other NCRR publications:

NCRR Reporter magazine

NCRR Highlights magazine

Research Resource directories

Program fact sheets