

## BIO “Core Programs”

Unsolicited proposals submitted to the Biology Directorate through its subject area programs are the source of the majority of awards made by the Directorate. The breadth of BIO’s subject area programs ensures support for fundamental research in areas of science with well-established histories of inquiry as well as broad categories of investment in people and infrastructure. The resulting awards are foundational to the non-medical biological sciences in maintaining distinct and stable knowledge domains, supporting intellectual communities of new and accomplished investigators, encouraging creative ideas and approaches in research and education, and expanding interdisciplinary collaborations within the biological sciences and with other scientific disciplines. These so-called “core” programs provide a durable base of stability for current and emerging research areas in the biological sciences that is critical for understanding the future of life on our planet in the face of unprecedented planetary change. The apparently static names of “core programs” do not capture their continuously evolving award portfolios made in response to new developments at and across domains of scientific inquiry. The value and necessity of reinvestment in a vital “core” as success rates continue to drop below 10% of submissions cannot be overestimated.

“Core” programs are distinct from special initiatives that take on a catalytic or synthetic rather than a sustaining role. Special initiatives are generally of limited duration and designed to catalyze novel scientific fields, shift community research directions, establish new community capacity for research, or broaden the participation of new communities in the research endeavor.

A balance between “core” programs and special initiatives is necessary to ensure the continued advancement of the US scientific enterprise.