



AMERICAN
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2008 ASHA Researcher Survey Section Report: Support for Research

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Written by the ASHA Researcher Survey Group

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Summary

In an effort to better serve the interests and needs of the communication sciences and disorders (CSD) research community, a survey was fielded on August 5, 2008, to all American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) constituents who indicated their primary or secondary employment function as researcher as well as to individuals who expressed interest in participating based on their response to an advertisement in the ASHA Research Digest e-mail list ($n = 1,233$). Two follow-up reminders were sent to nonrespondents. A total of 303 responses were received, for a usable response rate of 24.6%. Note that of the 303 responses received, 209 individuals completed the entire survey; 94 dropped out of the survey prior to completing all questions.

The survey covered nine broad areas: education and preparation, areas of research, evidence-based practice, research mentoring, domestic and international research collaborations, publications and online tools, reviewer experiences, support for research (financial and institutional), and ASHA's role in supporting researchers.

This report focuses on support for research (**excluding ASHA**), including funding, institutional support, barriers to accomplishing a research agenda, and overcoming those barriers.

Funding

Applying for Funding/Reasons for Not Applying

The majority of respondents (77%) reported applying for research funding within the past 5 years. Males and females were likely to have applied for funding in similar proportion (76% and 77%, respectively).

Of those who had not applied for funding (23%), most (60%) provided an "other" reason when presented with a list of possible barriers. Many indicated that funding had already been in place, while others indicated a lack of time. Of the response categories provided in the question,

- about a third (32%) indicated that they had not applied because of a perceived lack of skill in grant preparation;
- 24% said that the focus of their research did not fall within a grant opportunity available to them;
- 16% stated that there was a lack of institutional support;
- 14% cited a lack of access to applicable subject populations.

Funded Awards

Grant Types

The respondents were asked to provide specific information about any funded research grant and/or contract for which they received funding and served as the principal investigator (PI) or co-PI within the past 5 years. Grant types included center grants, disability supplements, minority supplements, and research project grants, including career development awards and supplements. Training grants, F31 awards, and conference grants were not to be included in their responses.

Funding Agencies

Not surprisingly, the National Institutes of Health (NIH) was the predominant funder, sponsoring 104 (or 43%) of the 242 reported awards. The number of awards, by Institute, was as follows:

- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders ($n = 80$)
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ($n = 14$)
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke ($n = 5$)
- National Institute on Aging ($n = 3$)
- National Cancer Institute ($n = 1$)
- National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research ($n = 1$)

University/institutional/intramural funds were reported to be the next largest funder with 51, or 21%, of the awards reported. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation funded 19 awards, as did state and local agencies. The Department of Education funded 13 projects, and the Department of Veterans Affairs funded 11.

Other sources of funding included foreign institutes, councils, and foundations, as well as research and manufacturing companies and other private foundations.

Research Topics

Research topics varied widely and included aphasia, augmentative and alternative communication, cochlear implants, electrophysiology, fluency, and language disorders.

Award Amounts

The majority of awards (total award amount across all years; direct funds only) were either in the “less than \$75,000” category (43%) or in the “more than \$250,000” category (38%). Nine percent of the awards were in the “\$75,000–\$149,999” category, and the remaining 11% were in the “\$150,000–\$249,999” range.

Duration

About a third of the awards (33%) were for a 1-year period. Nearly a quarter each were for 3 or 5 years (23% and 24%, respectively). Eleven percent were 2-year awards, and 8% were 4-year awards.

Unfunded Awards

Grant Types

The respondents were asked to provide specific information about any research grant and/or contract for which they submitted but did not receive funding within the past 5 years. Grant types included center grants, disability supplements, minority supplements, and research project grants, including career development awards and supplements. Training grants, F31 awards, and conference grants were not to be included in their responses.

Nonfunding Agencies

The NIH did not sponsor 64 (51%) of the 126 reported unfunded awards. The number of unfunded awards, by Institute, was as follows:

- National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders ($n = 47$)
- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke ($n = 6$)
- National Institute of Child Health and Human Development ($n = 5$)
- National Institute of Mental Health ($n = 4$),
- National Cancer Institute ($n = 1$)
- National Institute on Aging ($n = 1$)

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation did not sponsor 16 (13%) of the unfunded awards reported. University/institutional/intramural funds did not fund eight projects; state and local agencies also did not fund eight projects.

Other nonfunders included both federal and private funding sources, such as the Department of Education and the Deafness Research Foundation.

Research Topics

Research topics varied widely and included aphasia, fluency, hearing, language acquisition, and language disorders.

Reasons Projects Were Not Funded

The respondents indicated that the projects had not been sponsored for the following reasons: the project was too ambitious (19%); the question was not framed properly (15%); the statistical plan was inadequate (5%); and other (61%).

“Other” reasons provided by respondents in written comments included that the potential funder (a) lacked interest in the research topic, (b) was concerned that the topic was not directly clinically applicable, or (c) believed that the project lacked innovation. Some respondents indicated that they had simply fallen short in a highly competitive process. A number of respondents indicated that organizations did not always provide the reason(s) the project was not funded, even when they were asked to do so.

Changes in Research Focus Due to Nonfunding

The respondents were asked whether the focus of their research had changed as a result of either not receiving funding on a submitted grant application or a perceived likelihood that they would not receive funding. More than two thirds of the respondents (68%) indicated no. Of those whose focus had changed, reasons for the change and a description of any new directions in which they were moving included:

- “I am moving from the more basic questions to those that can have direct bearing on clinical practice. The change is due to both philosophical reasons of my own, and to changes in NIH funding geared to patient-oriented research.”
- “Difficulty obtaining adequate funds for treatment efficacy research. Doing more work in multicultural issues and more interdisciplinary collaborations.”
- “It became more focused, which was a good thing. Ultimately needed to make it less theoretical and more applicable.”

Resubmitting Applications

Of those who had submitted an *unfunded* grant to NIH in the past 5 years on which they were to serve as the PI, 47% resubmitted the grant two additional times after the initial rejection, 36% resubmitted the grant just once more, and 18% resubmitted the grant three additional times. Data were not gathered on the success of the resubmissions.

Institutional Support

Sponsored Research Offices

The vast majority of respondents (93%) indicated that their institution had a sponsored research office. Most of them offered a full range of resources and services (see Table 1).

Table 1. Resources and/or services offered by respondents’ institution’s sponsored research offices (multiple responses allowed).

Resource/Service	Response Percentage
Offers educational/training opportunities on grant preparation	78.0%
Facilitates funding opportunity searches	80.6%
Reviews sponsored project proposals	66.9%
Endorses sponsored project proposals	59.8%
Submits proposals to funding agency on PI's behalf	70.3%
Negotiates and accepts awards	76.2%
Issues subawards on behalf of the university	53.6%
Establishes accounts in the financial system	90.4%
Invoices sponsors for expenditures	55.5%
Fulfills sponsor's financial reporting requirements	63.0%
Serves as a resource for information about compliance issues related to topics such as animal research and human subject research	88.4%
Ensures compliance with sponsor terms and conditions, university policies, and federal regulations and requirements	81.8%

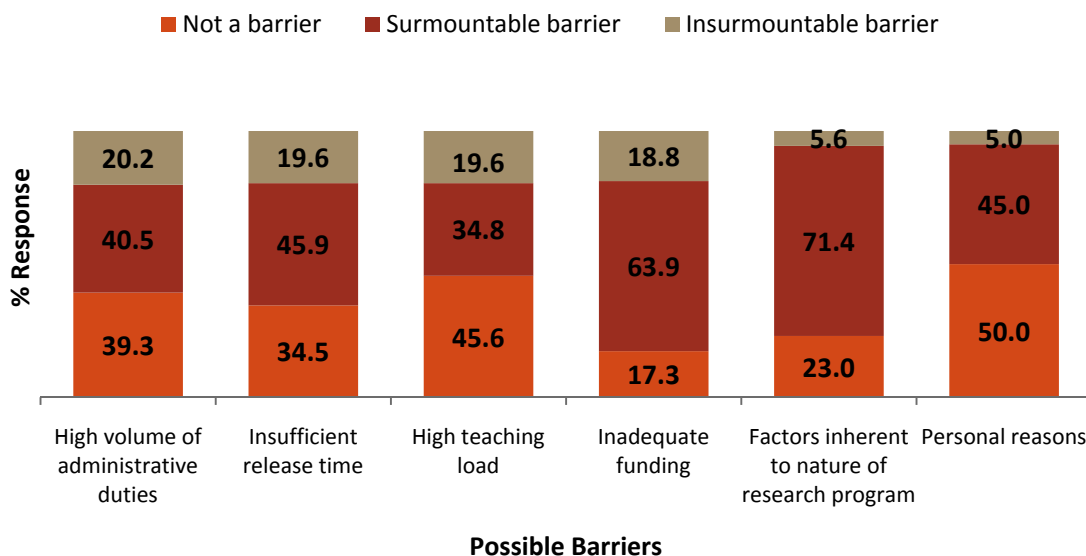
n = 167

Possible Barriers to Accomplishing Research Agenda

Surmountable and Insurmountable Barriers

The respondents were presented with a list of six possible barriers that they may have experienced in working toward their research agenda in the past 5 years. Factors inherent to the nature of the research program were perceived as a *surmountable* barrier by 71% of the respondents, followed by inadequate funding (64%; see Figure 1). A high volume of administrative duties, insufficient release time, a high teaching load, and inadequate funding were rated as *insurmountable* barriers by about 20% each. Personal reasons were rated as *not a barrier* by 50% of the respondents.

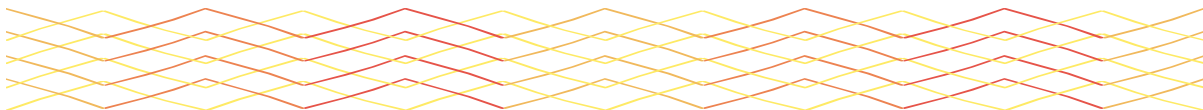
Figure 1. Possible Barriers to Accomplishing Research Agenda.



$n = 280$

Other barriers expressed by respondents in written comments included:

- Access to study populations
- Bias with respect to funding older researchers/inability of partially retired researchers to obtain resources
- High workload (teaching and clinic responsibilities)
- Inability of university to support collaborations with researchers at other universities or organizations due to human subject protections, direct cost sharing, etc.
- Inadequate institutional support (administrative, statistical/design, managerial, and logistical)
- Insufficient mentoring/assistance with grant application process
- Lack of master's and/or doctoral students with the time and/or skills to assist with data collection, analysis, etc.



Additional Information

Additional Survey Reports

Companion reports are also available on the ASHA Web site:

- *Executive Summary*
- *Respondent Demographics*
- *Areas of Research*
- *Research Processes*
- *ASHA Resources*

Citation

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Project Team

The project team comprised Gail Brook, Research Analyst and Technical Writer; Joanne Jessen, Director of Publications (retired); Lemmieta McNeilly, Chief Staff Officer for Speech-Language Pathology; Sharon Moss (project director), Director, Scientific Programs and Research Development (former); Loretta Nunez, Director, Academic Affairs; Jim Potter, Director, Government Relations and Public Policy (former); Margaret Rogers, Chief Staff Officer for Science and Research; and Sarah Slater, Director, Surveys and Information.

Questions?

Questions regarding this report may be directed to Gail Brook at gbrook@asha.org, or Sarah Slater at sslater@asha.org.

Thank You

Without the generous cooperation of the members who participate in our surveys, ASHA could not fulfill its mission to provide vital information about the professions and discipline to the Association membership and public. Thank you!