# The Pilot Study

ADC Administrators' Meeting
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# The Pilot Study

Survey Results

Recruiting Applicants

Evaluating Pilot Applications

Getting to "Yes" for Funding or Publications

# Initial Data Source
## First Survey

- Sent to all centers in January 2012
- Questions included:
    1) Number pilots awarded each year
    2) Dollar amount awarded per pilot
    3) Number applications received annually
    4) Percentage of total pilot awards receiving subsequent funding
- 93% response rate

# Recruiting Applicants
## # Pilot Applications Received & Budgets Awarded

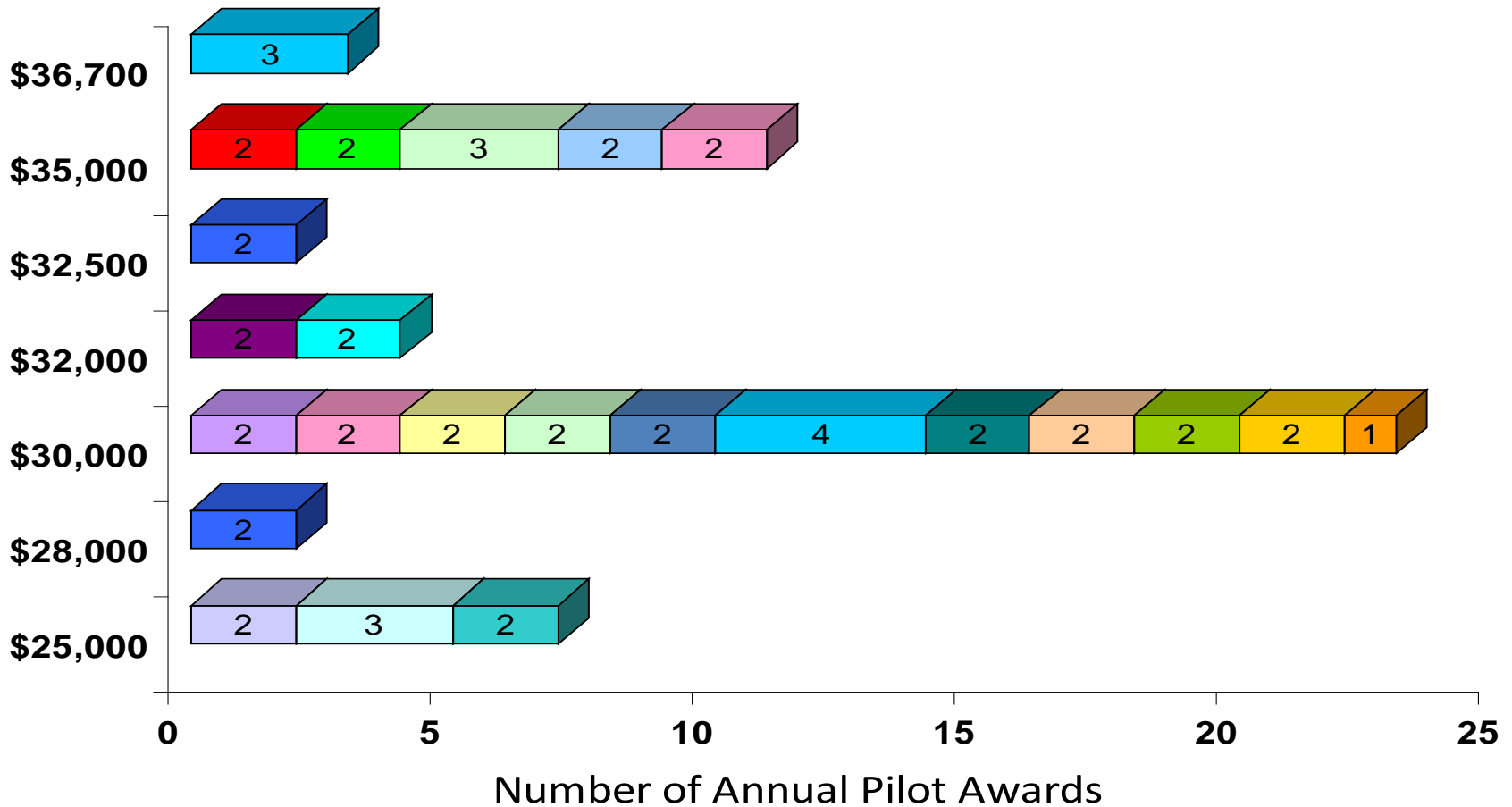| | Minimum | Maximum | Mean (sd) | Total Centers Reporting |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Budget ($) awarded per pilot (direct costs)** | $25,000 | $36,700 | $30,414 (3,445) | 27 |
| **Number pilots awarded annually** | 1 | 4 | 2 (0.5) | 27 |
| **Average # pilots received** | 4 | 18 | 10 (3.8) | 27 |
| **Lowest # pilots received** | 3 | 12 | 7 (2.5) | 19 |
| **Highest # pilots received** | 4 | 18 | 11 (4.1) | 7 |

# Applications Received by ADC
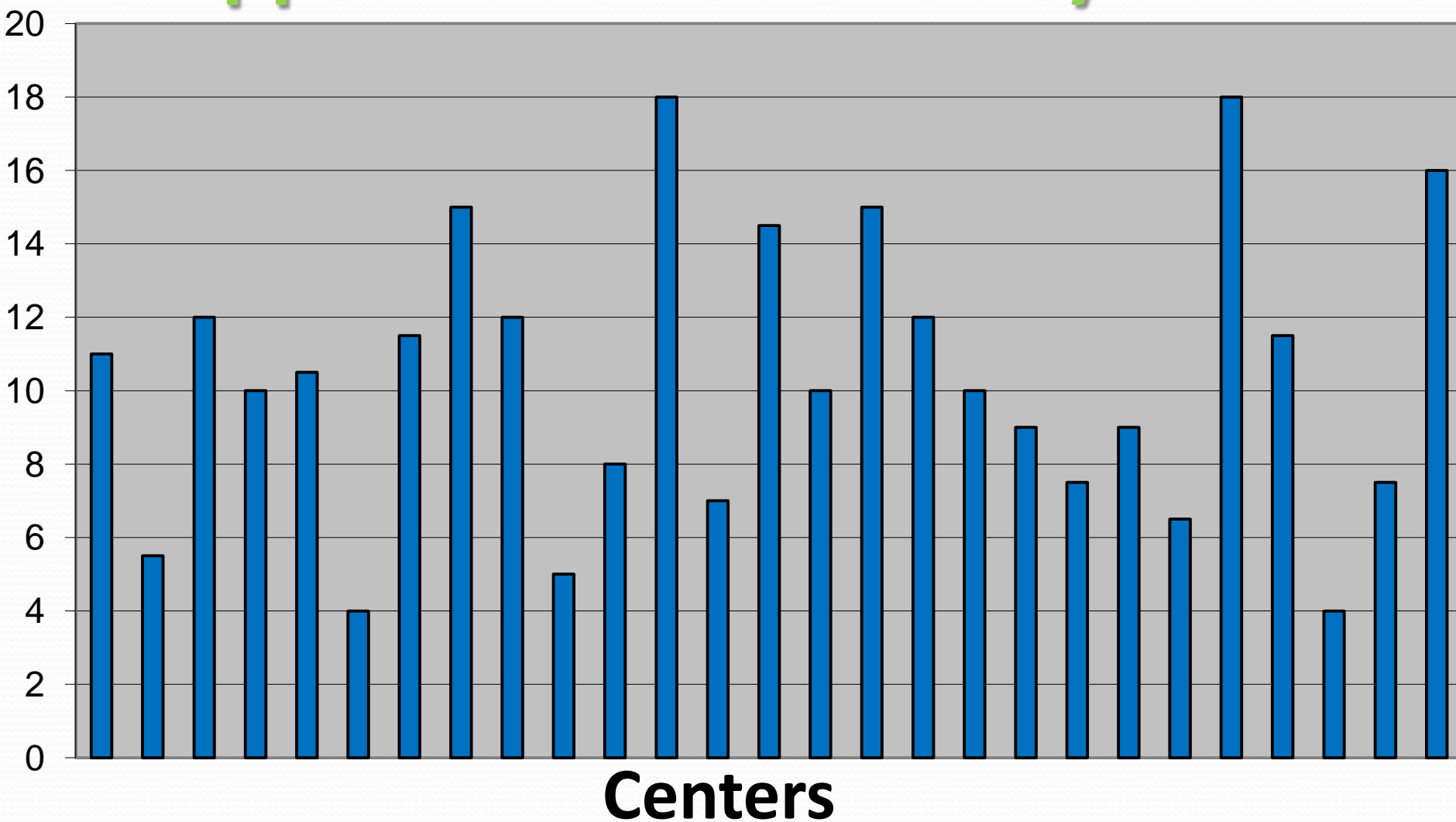
# Pilot Award Amounts by ADC
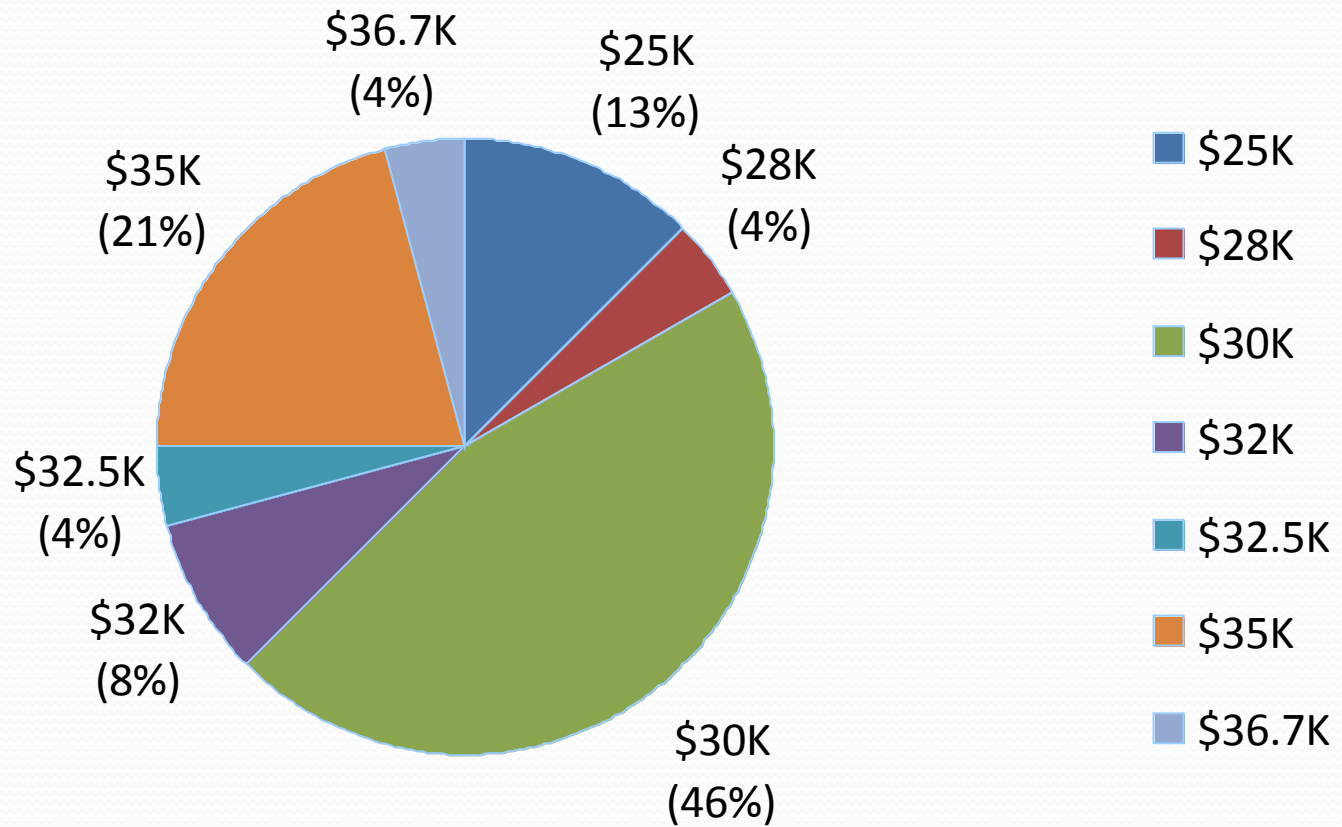
# Funding Distribution by ADC (Directs)

# Follow-up Data Source

- Centers selected for additional input:
  - Number of pilot applications received
  - Conversion rate for pilots to subsequent funding
- Surveyed recruitment process, characteristics of awardees, pilot evaluation process and subsequent funding
- Requested samples of each center's Call for Proposals and Pilot Scoring/Review Guidelines

# Recruiting Applicants
## Target Audience (Eligibility & Size)

- Eligibility
  - Junior Investigators/Post-Docs
    - Interest in AD
    - Requiring initial support
  - Established Investigators
    - Non-AD fields with novel approaches to AD research
    - Testing new AD hypotheses/methodology
- Size
  - Typically targeted to several hundred investigators

# Recruiting Applicants
## Methods

- Announcements via email, listservs, website postings, word-of-mouth, flyers, newsletters, university newspapers, etc

- Most successful methods primarily reported as all of the above, and word-of-mouth and/or listservs

# Evaluating Pilot Applications

## Who evaluates the pilot applications?

- Executive/Steering Committee members
- External Advisory Committee/Board members
- Designated Pilot Review Committees assembled to review all pilot applications; can be a 'standing' committee or ad hoc
- Experts as needed (either external or internal)
- Responses included a combination of these options, particularly Executive Committee and experts

## Other aspects of reviewers

- Usually 2-3 reviewers recruited for each application, typically within institution but also external, as needed
- One institution invites applicants to recommend 2-3 reviewers, all external to the institution, who receive an honorarium

# Evaluating Pilot Applications (Cont)

**What is the evaluation process?**

All Centers have multi-step review process:

- Recruit reviewers and provide criteria and scoring rules*
- Discuss applications/reviews further by a committee:
    - Most often the ADRC Executive Committee
    - A special pilot review committee
- Final decisions on funding are most often made by Center Directors or Center leadership group
- Some Centers use their Executive Committee and their Leadership similar to NIH Study Sections and Council

*One center has a screening review by a local expert who determines if the application advances to further review, but this center combines their call for proposals with multiple institutional pilot programs and receives over 50 applications.*

# Evaluating Pilot Applications (Cont)

## How are applications prioritized and selected for funding?

- Reviewers scores are tallied and considered by:
    - Executive Committees
    - ADRC Director and Associate Directors
    - Or both sequentially
- Priorities (order does not imply importance)
    - Scientific merit and innovation
    - Junior investigators
    - Potential for future funding
    - Use of ADRC resources (including NACC)
    - Balance of bench and clinical areas

**High scoring applications, that also meet other center aims, take precedence over score alone.**

# Characterization of Awardees & Pilot Topics

- 80-90% junior faculty

- 10-20% mid-/senior-level investigators

- Across various medical/basic science departments and as far outreaching as Radiology, Ophthalmology, Pediatrics, Dermatology, Otology/Laryngology, and Surgery

- One center reported success with applicants from their Graduate School of Public Health, School of Nursing, School of Arts & Sciences and other local universities

- Awarded topics are broad and often cover novel approaches to clinical/behavioral research as well as basic science investigations

# Getting to "Yes" for Funding
## Subsequent Funding from Pilot Data

Centers with successful pilot programs reported high percentages of pilot awardees who receive subsequent funding (50 – 90%)

- Career Level – mix of junior investigators and mid-level researchers in various disciplines

- Subject Matter – mix of basic and applied science, novel concepts

# Getting to "Yes" for Funding
## Center Support

- Assigns mentors to each awardee to guide them through their projects, future funding opportunities, publications, and career track

- Invites to meetings and seminars to provide opportunities to consult with senior researchers

- Provides access to NACC and ADC clinical core subject recruitment, neuropathology brain tissue, MRI data, and data analytic expertise

# Getting to "Yes" for Funding
## Applicant Feedback

- Typically provided in the form of scores and written comments to educate and improve preparation of future applications for resubmission in a subsequent year

- Offers to meet with ADC leadership to discuss other sources of funding (i.e., other pilot programs) if not awarded

- Only provide if requested

# Getting to "Yes" for Funding

- **Tracking Pilot Productivity**
  - Annual emails to current and past pilot awardees for updates
  - Electronic queries for publications
- **Pilot Program Challenges**
  - Obtaining an appropriate number of quality applications each year
  - More promising applications than able to fund
  - Tracking future activity of external researchers is difficult

# Pilot Study Summary
## Best Practices

- Actively recruit applicants by word of mouth
- Obtain 3 evaluations by internal and external reviewers
- Provide applicant feedback in the form of scores and written comments to educate and improve preparation of future applications or resubmission in a subsequent year
- Mentor pilot awardees
- Engage Center leadership for review process
- Establish priorities for decision making as determined Center leadership

# Thank You

All Centers who participated in the initial survey

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