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# NIH FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS

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<https://postdocs.ucsf.edu/sites/g/files/tkssra2836/f/wysiwyg/hahn-predoc-fellowship-slides-041719.pdf>

# INTRODUCTION

- Intro to the types of NIH funding
- The F30/F31 main sections
- NIH submission and review process
- Resources for preparing your grant application

# ABOUT NATIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE AWARDS (NRSA) F30/F31 GRANTS

- 3 types
  - F30 – dual degrees (e.g. MD/PhD)
  - F31 – PhDs
  - F31 Diversity –under-represented groups / persons with disabilities
- Provide stipends (\$24,816/year) and tuition (up to \$21/year), other \$ (\$4K/year)
- Good success rates in 2018 (report.nih.gov success\_rates) :
  - F30: 244/576 (42%!!)
  - F31: 699/2673 (26%)

<https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/fellowships>

# COMPONENTS TO THE PROPOSAL

P.S. READ THE PROGRAM ANNOUNCEMENT AND KNOW THE DEADLINES

E.G. [HTTPS://GRANTS.NIH.GOV/GRANTS/GUIDE/PA-FILES/PA-19-195.HTML](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/pa-19-195.html)

Section of Application	Page Limits
Project Summary/Abstract	30 lines of text
Project Narrative	Three sentences
Introduction to Resubmission or Revision Application (when applicable)	1
Applicant's Background and Goals for Fellowship Training	6
Specific Aims	1
Research Strategy	6
Respective Contributions	1
Selection of Sponsor and Institution	1
Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements	6
Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants	6
Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training	2
Applications for Concurrent Support (when applicable)	1
Biographical Sketch (NOTE: Format for applicant differs from sponsors')	5 (each)
Letters of reference (3-5 letters)	No limit

# YOU ARE NOT ALONE IN THIS ENDEAVOR!

- Primary sponsor who is a senior investigator with a track-record of NIH funding
  - Mentored others, preferably other F awardee
  - Should be able to mentor you in the content area and in career development
- Include a co-sponsor if needed to fill a gap, e.g. if sponsor is very busy
- Include consultants who will complement the primary sponsor's strengths.
- Every person included should have a unique role.
- Keep your team small (3-5 members).
- Reserve advisors outside your current work for references
  - (writing confidential letters in support of your application)

# SPECIFIC AIMS AND RESEARCH STRATEGY

- You will likely spend the most time (around 50%) on these sections
- The research plan for a F grant is a training vehicle.
  - should provide an opportunity to acquire new skills and be well integrated with your training goals and activities.
  - Include explicit references to training goals within this section (e.g. methods that you will receive training on before doing).
- Research plan scope: Not too little, not too much
  - Project should move the field forward (is it publishable?)
  - Must be distinct from sponsor's research, though leverage it.
  - Plan must be feasible given time and resources

# RESEARCH STRATEGY: SIGNIFICANCE SECTION

- Usually 1-2 pages
- Expand on Aims
  - Review the literature that describes the health problem
  - **Establish the gap** in the literature / the need for this work
- Scientific Premise
  - strengths and weaknesses of prior literature (should point to the gap), including preliminary data on the topic (work by you or your sponsor)
- Expected research contribution
  - how the results of the proposed study (or the long-term goals) will change practice, health, etc.
- Note how the proposal is relevant to an NIH priority

# RESEARCH STRATEGY: APPROACH SECTION

- Usually 3-4 pages
- Your preliminary data showing feasibility of the approaches
  - Not required, but helpful
- The nuts and bolts of what you are going to do
  - Needs to have enough detail to convince reviewers of feasibility in your hands
  - Includes data collection, statistical power, statistical analyses, potential pitfalls, timeline, and future directions
- Step by step methods with tables and figures, etc.
  - Methods should be very clear to reader (almost like a written protocol)
- Be sure to address any potential red flag, like human/animal safety
  - (even if it is addressed elsewhere in the application)



# IDEAL TIMELINE!

Time before deadline	What
3-6 months	Discuss with supervisor/mentor to get advice on your readiness, general direction of the proposal, appropriate institutes
3-4 months	Draft specific aims page, review with mentor, revise!
2-3 months	Contact NIH program official(s) for interest in your content area, your specific eligibility
	Confirm sponsor, identify and meet with co-sponsors and consultants, review aims with them
	Inform Research Service Coordinator (RSC) that you will be submitting – get timeline
1-3 months	Draft research and training sections, request biosketches (need to adapt), letters of reference, letters of support (need to draft), sponsors' section (may need to outline)
1 month	Get outside reviews, work with RSC on the remaining materials
2-3 days	Review all materials uploaded by RSC, RSC will do the final submission



# F AWARD NIH STUDY SECTION REVIEW CRITERIA

- Fellowship applicant
- Sponsors, collaborators, and consultants
- Research training plan
- Training potential
- Institutional environment and commitment to training

# STUDY SECTION

- There are 20 Fellowship review panels
  - <https://public.csr.nih.gov/studysections/fellowship/pages/default.aspx>
- 3-4 reviewers get your proposal several weeks before study section
  - They are asked to write up reviews: summary, and strengths and weaknesses of each of the 5 review criteria
  - They will give you a score for each of the 5 criteria, and an overall “impact” score
  - Impact scores are NOT the weighted average of the 5 criterion scores
    - 1=perfect, 9=worst
    - The score you get is multiplied by 10 (so 10 is a perfect score)
- If preliminary scores from the reviewers make the cut (usually top 50-60%), your proposal will be discussed.
- During the study section meeting, the reviewers will present your proposal and all members vote on the final score
- You will get the reviewers’ written comments, plus a one paragraph summary of the discussion (if discussed)
- Posted on ERA commons website

# THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN WRITING

- Attend grant writing workshops!
- Read others' successful grant proposals.
  - If possible read their review sheets as well.
- Make your proposal easy to read. Clear short headings,
  - judicious use of bolding or underlining (only a few per page),
  - space between paragraphs
  - Limited abbreviations
- Get reviews of your concept early on and then get a peer review when it is mostly done.

# QUESTIONS?

