National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship (F32)

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Goal and Aims

- Goal: Support emerging investigators in obtaining an NRSA F32 grant
- Aims:
- Delineate the purpose and value of the F32.
- Describe the anatomy of an F32 Application
- Outline a writing strategy to obtain and F32 award.

Goal and Purpose of the F32

Section I. Funding Opportunity Description

The overall goal of the NIH Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) program is to help ensure that a diverse pool of highly trained scientists is available in appropriate scientific disciplines to address the Nation's biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research needs. NRSA fellowships support the training of pre-and postdoctoral scientists, dual-degree investigators, and senior researchers. More information about NRSA programs may be found at the NIH Research Training and Career Development website.

The purpose of the Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship (Parent F32) is to support promising candidates during their mentored postdoctoral training under the guidance of outstanding faculty sponsors. The proposed research and training plan should enhance the individual's potential to develop into a productive, independent researcher by providing strong mentorship, appropriate training and career development opportunities, and strong institutional support and commitment. The training plan should document the need for, and the anticipated value of, the proposed mentored training in relationship to the individual's research career goals. The training plan should also facilitate the fellow's transition to the next stage of his/her career.

It is expected that the mentored training experience will provide:

- A strong foundation in rigorous research design, experimental methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to the proposed research;
- An enhanced ability to conceptualize and think through research problems with increasing independence;
- Experience conducting research using appropriate, state-of-the-art methods;
- The opportunity to present and publish research findings (including first authorship as appropriate) and to interact with members of the scientific community at scientific meetings and workshops;
- Professional and scientific skills needed to transition to the next stage of the candidate's research career; and
- Refinement of the candidate's understanding of the health-related sciences and the relationship of his/her research to health and disease.

Anatomy of the F32 Application

For all Fellowship (F) Applications
Including F05, F30, F31, F32, F33, F37, F38, F99/K00

If no page limit is listed in the table below, in Section IV of the FOA under Page Limitations, or in a related notice, you can assume the attachment does not have a limit.

| Section of Application	Page Limits (if different from FOA supersed...
Project Summary/Abstract	30 lines of te...
Project Narrative	Three senten...
Introduction to Resubmission or Revision Application (when applicable)	1
Applicant's Background and Goals for Fellowship Training	
Specific Aims	1
Research Strategy	
Respective Contributions	1
Selection of Sponsor and Institution	1
Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements	
Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants	
Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training	2
Note: This page limit includes the Additional Educational information required for F30 and F31 applications.	
Applications for Concurrent Support (when applicable)	1
Biographical Sketch	5

Tips for Competitive Proposal Writing

- Reviewers are accomplished, but naïve.
- Remember the psychology of the reviewer
- Write with authority
- Use the rubric

Reviewers are Accomplished, yet Naïve

- Your application will be reviewed by three individuals, the primary, secondary, and tertiary reviewer
- Reviewers on CSR or Institute-specific panels are typically selected from current or recent past grantees
  - Therefore, that person is an accomplished scientist
- Reviewers will have expertise in the general area of your application, not necessarily the specific content.
  - Therefore, they are "naïve" to your area
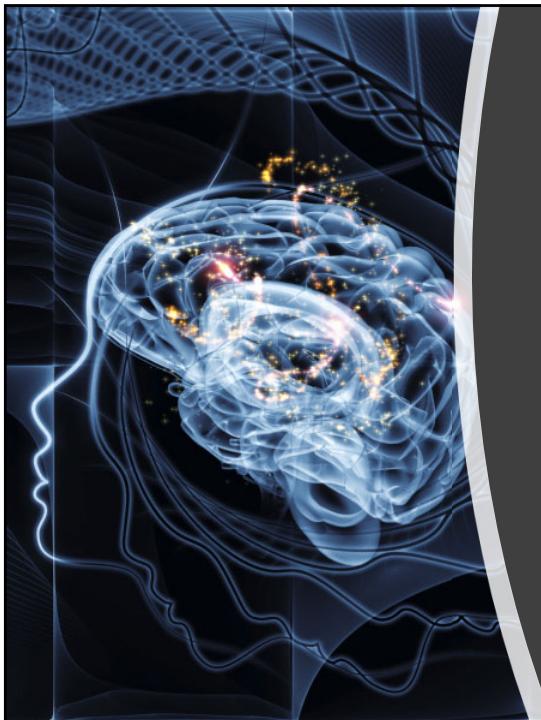
The Psychology of the Reviewer!

- Reviewers are busy and juggling many responsibilities
  - Reviews are often done as part of their "second shift"
- Reviewers are not glamorously compensated or masochists who take pleasure in shredding others' ideas
  - They want to advance the best science in their field, and they do so through this service
- Like you, Reviewers want to create a positive impression of ability in the minds of other reviewers on the panel

Write with Authority (Grant writing is not MS writing)

- Short, forceful sentences
  - A recent systematic review of the literature on the association of X with Y reported an average association that ranged from r=0.20 to r=0.50 (Smith, Jones & Whoever, 2019).
  - The typically observed effect size of X with Y ranges from small to moderate (Smith, Jones & Whoever, 2019).
- Active versus passive voice.
  - Research suggests that X may be causally associated with Y a year later (Smith & Jones, 2021).
  - Smith and Jones (2021) documented that X predicted Y across one year.
- Select strong words to convey ideas (e.g., "scholars" versus "scientists")

Use the Rubric
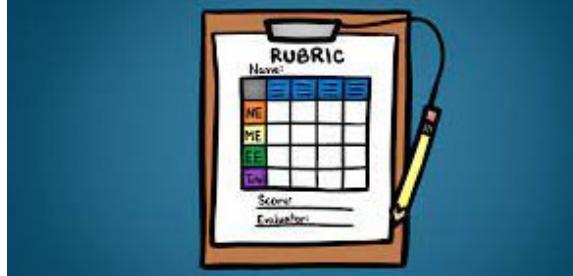
Fellowship Applicant

- Are the candidate's academic record and research experience of high quality?
- Does the candidate have the potential to develop into an independent and productive researcher?
- Does the candidate demonstrate commitment to a research career in the future?
- Does the research project reflect a significant contribution of the candidate to the originality of the project idea, approach and/or hypotheses relative to the career stage of the candidate?
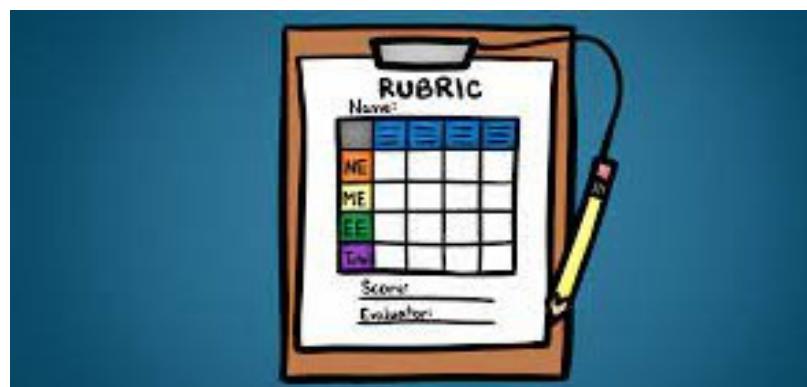
Training Potential

- Are the proposed research project and training plan likely to provide the candidate with the requisite individualized and mentored experiences in order to obtain appropriate skills for a research career?
- Does the training plan take advantage of the candidate's strengths and address gaps in needed skills?
- Does the training plan document a clear need for, and value of, the proposed training?
- Does the proposed training have the potential to serve as a sound foundation that will clearly enhance the candidate's ability to develop into a productive researcher?
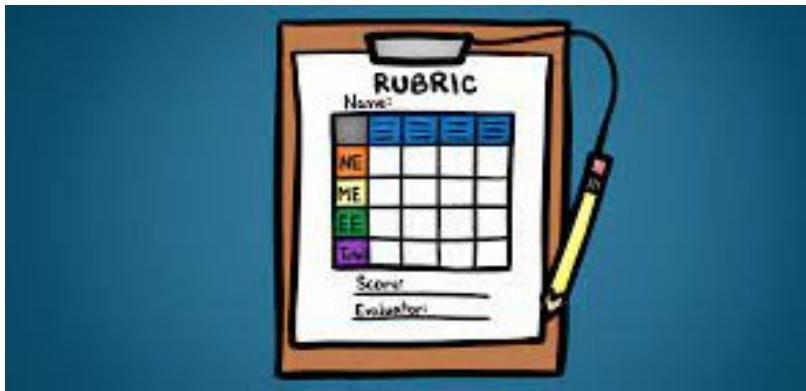
Research Training Plan

o · Is the proposed research project of high scientific quality, and is it well integrated with the proposed research training plan?
o · Is the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project rigorous?
o · Has the candidate included plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project?
o · Has the candidate presented strategies to ensure a robust and unbiased approach, as appropriate for the work proposed?
o · Has the candidate presented adequate plans to address relevant biological variables, such as sex, for studies in vertebrate animals or human subjects?
o · Based on the sponsor's description, is the candidate's proposed research project sufficiently distinct from the sponsor's ongoing funded research for the candidate's career stage?
o · Is the research project consistent with the candidate's stage of research development?
o · Is the proposed time frame feasible to accomplish the proposed training?
o · Does the training plan provide adequate opportunities to present and publish research findings and meet with scientists in the community at national meetings as the work progresses?
o · Will the training plan provide the professional skills needed for the candidate to transition to the next stage of his/her research career?
o · If proposed, will the clinical trial experience contribute to the proposed project and/or the candidate's research training?

If nothing else, Remember....

- Reviewers are accomplished but naïve.
- The psychology of the reviewer
- Write with authority
- Use the rubric!