

## Written Answers to Pre-Workshop Questions:

### General overall questions:

11. How do we stand out from one another? What are the characteristics of successful application?
  - The best way to stand out with your application is to put together a well-crafted, visually appealing, well written document. Two basic types of applications will stand out in a reviewer's mind: an application that is poorly constructed, and an application that is exceptionally constructed.
  - In general, you need to be extremely meticulous with your logic, your writing, your word usage, conciseness and clarity, and how you visually present the application.
  - Remember, a well-constructed, visually appealing, clear and concise application will make it easier for the reader, which will stand out in their mind.
  
12. What are the most important parts of your application?
  - Every single part of the grant application is important and requires your full attention with respect to detail, content, clarity, and structure.
  - There are a few minor sections that will have minimal impact on your overall score (e.g., Respective Contributions). However, even this section requires attention to detail.
  
13. What is the NSF equivalent of this [funding mechanism, and] am I eligible for both or just one if I'm in Social Psychology?
  - Here is the link for the NSF equivalent: (<https://www.nsfgrfp.org/>).
  - You are eligible to apply for both funding mechanisms simultaneously. However, if you successfully receive funding from both, you must pick one or the other to accept. You are not allowed to receive two independent funding sources for the same project/training.
  
14. Is it ok if I don't write one until I've graduated and am working as an adjunct professor?
  - Only individuals who are graduate students, dual degree students, or post-doctoral researchers actively in their training period are eligible for the F-series of applications.

### General questions about timing:

5. When is the best time to apply for these awards, especially as a postdoctoral fellow on a yearly contract? Thank you
  - Remember, there are about 8 months between the time you physically submit your application and the time you would receive the funds, should your application be successful.
  - Reviewers will look at what stage you are in your training period (e.g., second or third year) and evaluate whether you will have sufficient time in your training period to warrant providing funds.
  - Therefore, if you are far along in your training (e.g., late 4<sup>th</sup> year/early 5<sup>th</sup> year), a reviewer may feel that you are too far along in your training.
  - Therefore, the best time for a graduate student or dual degree student is end of second year/beginning of third year. This will give you time to develop your project, be immersed in the lab, and yet have several years of training ahead of you.
  - The best time for a postdoctoral fellow would be during their first two years of training.

- These answers do not preclude the possibility that a person later in their training would not stand a good chance of getting funded. They do! Just that these times are optimal for applying and having time to resubmit if necessary.

Science portion related questions:

6. Do you need published work to win these types of awards?
  - Usually yes, you do. However, it depends where you are in your training when you apply for the funds.
  - If you are within the first year of your training or the first year within a lab, a reviewer will not expect you to have publications from that lab.
  - If you are a postdoc the reviewers will expect you to have published work from your graduate career.
  - If you are later in your time in a lab (e.g., third year or later), there may be more of an expectation for you to have published or for you to provide a reasonable explanation for why you haven't published yet.
7. How do you write a compelling grant without any preliminary data (e.g., NINDS early postdoc NRSA)?
  - Technically, the F-series of grant applications do not require preliminary data. However, having preliminary data is always considered a plus.
  - If you don't have preliminary data, you must provide solid and compelling literature evidence written in a clear, logical manner that supports the hypothesis you will be testing in your project.
  - This literature evidence may be published work from the lab demonstrating that the expertise is present to perform the technical aspects of the work.
  - On a side note, it is also okay to include unpublished data from the lab that is not your work. As long as the data is unpublished it may be considered preliminary data.
  - However, you must acknowledge the person who did the work or provided the data. This may be done by stating in the text (e.g., Figure 3, data provided by....) and/or in the figure legend (using the same language).
8. How do you explain best convince others that your science is necessary and can truly leave a lasting impact?
  - This information is included in the Significance section of the Research Strategy (i.e., the science section of the application).
  - In the Significance section you give a brief overview of the background to establish the field, identify a gap in knowledge that prevents the field from moving forward, and then explicitly state how the work you will be performing will fill this gap in knowledge.
  - This information is followed by an explicit statement; "This work is significant because....", with a clear, concise, detailed, and defined statement of exactly why the work proposed in your project is significant.
9. I would like to learn specifically about how feasibility is evaluated in NRSA applications, in addition to everything else covered.
  - Feasibility is evaluated either through the literature evidence and/or preliminary data that supports the proposed work.
  - This information is provided in the Rationale (literature evidence) and Preliminary Data section for each independent aim.

- The reviewer will read what is provided and make a decision whether the information adequately supports the hypothesis, supports the ability of the applicant to perform the work, or supports the validity of the model that will be used.
10. How important is the research topic for funding? I.e., should "fundability" shape what research we choose to do?
- Fundability of a research topic (i.e., working on a hot topic to improve your chances of getting funded) should not shape what you choose to perform in your project.
  - The focus of the F-series of applications is on the training. Along these lines, how well the nature of the scientific project provides a solid training environment and structure for the applicant is what drives the evaluation of the science.
  - Remember, how well the project is constructed is a larger part of this evaluation, since a poorly constructed research project will indicate minimal mentoring and training in putting together the project.

General questions about construction and sponsors:

11. How much to draft without direct PI input?
- This depends on the PI. Some mentors like to have the trainee draft an application themselves before they provide input. The mentor most likely wants to see what the trainee is able to do on their own before providing input.
  - Other mentors (like myself) prefer to be more hands on. They will have the trainee write a section at a time (e.g., Specific Aims, Significance, Rationale, etc.) and mentor them on writing as they go along, expecting to see improvement as the writing proceeds.
  - What should not happen is that the trainee writes the application devoid of any input from their mentor. See the answer to the next question should this be the case.
12. How to work with PIs who may not provide a lot of hands-on input?
- It is very important that you have several people with experience in writing grant applications read your writing.
  - You are not expected to have experience in writing a grant application at this stage of your training.
  - If you have a PI who does not or will not provide input, then it is critical that you find someone who will read the application and provide you solid, positive, critical input.
  - While it is okay to have a fellow trainee read your writing, they do not have that much more experience than you do, if at all.
  - You must have someone read it who has submitted grant applications, and more importantly, been successful in getting funded and/or sat on a study section.
  - This person may be a member of your thesis committee, a trusted faculty member, a collaborator, etc.
13. How to choose recommenders?
- It is best to choose letters of recommendation from several aspects of your training career. The reviewers want to see that you have a history of excellence.
  - If you've performed research at another institute, select someone from that institute, preferably your mentor or advisor. For example, a postdoc should have their graduate advisor be a letter writer. If you performed undergraduate research, have that advisor be a letter writer, too.

- Be sure to select people that you know will write you a good letter of recommendation. A tepid letter of recommendation will not look favorably on the applicant.
- If you are not on good terms with a previous advisor or mentor, do not select them. If this is your graduate advisor then select someone else from that institute and have them explain why you and the advisor are no longer on good terms.
- It is bad to have all of your letters of recommendation come from the same institute or the same department in which you are performing your present training.

14. How to use co-sponsors?

- A co-sponsor is required to provide training in an area deemed deficient in the primary sponsor by the reviewers.
- This deficiency may be lack of funding for the duration of the training, a minimal training history (i.e., few people trained), or minimal publication history from their independent research.
- Regardless of what the co-sponsor brings (e.g., funding, training history, scientific expertise), they must be seamlessly integrated into the training plan for the applicant.
- It is insufficient to simply select someone because they have funding or because they have an extensive training history.
- They must be able to contribute to the overall training of the applicant, must be integrally involved with the training, and in essence serve as a mentor to the primary mentor.

Selecting of institute/study section:

15. How do you choose which institute to apply to if your proposed research fits within the purview of two funders?

- I've provided the link to a list of all of the institutes in the NIH.
  - i. <https://www.nih.gov/institutes-nih/list-nih-institutes-centers-offices>
- If your proposed research falls under the purview of two different institutes, arrange a time to talk to the program officer to discuss which of the two institutes may provide a better possibility for funding.
  - i. Does one institute have a larger budget than the other.
  - ii. Does one institute receive fewer F-series applications than the other.
- Discussions with the PO should help you make an informed decision.