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MERCED

Writing a Successful Postdoctoral Fellowship Proposal

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Nuts and bolts

Research and fellowship funding programs are highly competitive.

Start looking early! Plan on several months **or more** to prepare your proposal.

Most searches and applications are web-based.

Application guidelines vary among agencies and opportunities.

Make sure you follow the solicitation guidelines precisely, from page limitations to font size to order of items

Look carefully at eligibility criteria – fields included, populations included

Sources of fellowship funding

Federal Agencies

- The six Biggest Players are: NIH, DOE, DOD, NSF, NASA and USDA

National and regional non-profits and foundations (e.g., Ford Foundation, American Cancer Society, Autism Speaks, American Foundation for AIDS Research/amfAR)

State funded programs (e.g. California Breast Cancer Research Program, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, California HIV/AIDS Research Program)

Private companies (e.g., tech industries),

Professional associations

Institution – based

Identifying funding sources

Discuss sources of support for your field with your faculty **mento**r

Ask your peers, colleagues, speakers, and others about their funding sources and knowledge, especially if they work on projects similar to yours.

Check acknowledgements in relevant **professional literature** to identify funders interested in your topic area.

Search funding agency websites and publications and electronic **databases f**or relevant opportunities.

Social Media – e.g., https://www.facebook.com/NDSEG
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GRAPES: http://www.gdnet.ucla.edu/grpinst.htm **(Searchable site, and No, you don't have to be a Bruin to use it!)**

Community of Science PIVOT

A multi-disciplinary searchable funding opportunities database

Helps identify potential collaborators

Matches faculty with funding opportunities

Represents over 40,000 private, federal, and international funding opportunities

Need account in order to:

- Access COS Pivot from off-campus
- Save search results
- Manage your Home page (dashboard)
- Receive funding alerts

www.pivot.cos.com

Click on **Sign up,** written in blue print on the top right corner

You Tube Pivot Channel: http://www.youtube.com/user/ProQuestPivot

NSF and Ford

NSF funds some postdoctoral fellowships (see specific programs) and research grants.

- Intellectual Merit
- Broadening Participation

Remember STEM at NSF includes most social sciences

Ford: “The awards will be made to individuals who, in the judgment of the review panels, have demonstrated superior academic achievement, are committed to a career in teaching and research at the college or university level, show promise of future achievement as scholars and teachers, and are well prepared to use diversity as a resource for enriching the education of all students.”

http://sites.nationalacademies.org/pga/fordfellowships/index.htm

NSF Merit Review Criteria

Intellectual Merit: the potential to advance knowledge.

For example, panelists evaluating applications submitted to the Graduate Research Fellowship Program may consider the following with respect to the **Intellectual Merit Criterion**:

- the potential of the applicant to advance knowledge based on a holistic analysis of the complete application, including the Personal, Relevant Background, and Future Goals Statement, Graduate Research Plan Statement, strength of the academic record, description of previous research experience or publication/presentations, and references.

Broader Impacts: the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

- Panelists may consider the following with respect to the **Broader Impacts Criterion**: the potential of the applicant for future broader impacts as indicated by personal experiences, professional experiences, educational experiences and future plans.

Be explicit about Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts, and label each section: Describe the contributions of your activity to advancing knowledge in STEM fields as well as the potential for broader societal impacts.

Repetition is your friend

Read the solicitation carefully, and then read it again, and again

- ❑ Be clear about eligibility criteria, order of items, page and font limitations, etc.

Allow time for multiple reviews of your proposal

- ❑ Develop a timeline, working backwards from deadline, with your mentor

Ask multiple people (mentors, friends, you – your aunt) to read the proposal

- ❑ For substance, theory, methods
- ❑ For grammar, clarity, avoidance of repetition, overused and missing words

Some questions to consider

What are the expected outcomes of your research?

What hypothesis will you test?

What approach will you take ?

How is your research plan innovative?

What training opportunities does the research provide for you?

What are you and your research group's competitive advantages?

Are you (and your research group and collaborators) qualified to study this area?

Does your institution have the resources to support the proposed work?

Successful proposals tend to…

Have clear and straightforward introductory sections. Put the most important information in the first sentence or two Be tailored to the goals of the agency.

Appear feasible and realistic within the timeframes stated and with the resources available. Not promising unrealistic results.

Demonstrate knowledge of subject area and literature

Contain new and original ideas.

Have a succinct, focused project plan with appropriate methodology.

Clearly state why the proposed research is important, significant, and what it will contribute to the field.

More suggestions

Use informative subheadings, **bold,** underline to make it easier to read

If there is a gap in your expertise address it

Address how you will deal with the inevitable pitfalls and limitations in your research plan

Include relevant, quality graphics: many reviewers are visual thinkers.

Thank You! Questions?