

Overview of Research Funding – Postdoctoral Opportunities

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Overview

- Why pursue funding?
- Postdoctoral funding opportunities and how to find them
- Communicating your research ideas
- What competitive proposals do well
- General tips for applying and writing
- Submitting your proposal

Why Pursue Funding?

- Writing competitive proposals is a fundamental facet of present-day scientific research
- Besides constructive feedback on your research, the application is great preparation for:
 - Other award applications
 - Writing publications
 - Professional connections
 - Job applications
 - Future grant writing...



Sources of Funding

- Federal Agencies
 - The 'Big Six': DOE, DOD, NASA, NIH, NSF, and USDA
- National and regional non-profits and Foundations
 - e.g., American Cancer Society, Autism Speaks, United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation
- State funded programs
 - e.g., California Breast Cancer Research Program, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine, California Program on Access to Care
- Private Companies
- Professional Associations
- Institution – based

Finding Funding Opportunities

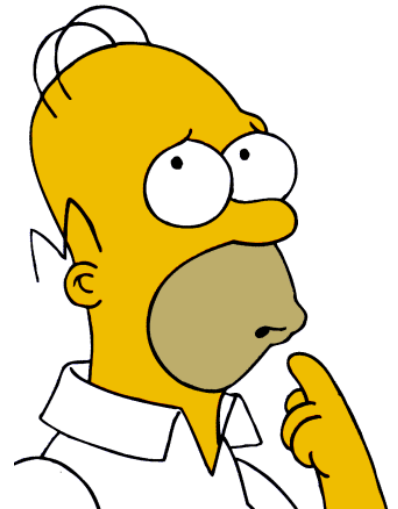


- **FIRST and FOREMOST:** discuss sources of support for your field with your faculty advisor/mentor
- **Networking:** ask your peers, colleagues, speakers, and others about their funding sources and knowledge, especially if they work on projects similar to yours
- **Scholarly literature:** check acknowledgements in relevant professional literature to identify funders interested in your topic area
- **Databases:** search funding agency websites and publications and electronic databases for relevant opportunities



Keep in Mind

- Research and fellowship funding programs are highly-competitive
- Start looking early! Plan on several months **or more** to prepare your proposal
- Application guidelines vary among agencies and opportunities



Finding Funding Opportunities: What can you learn from the Agency's Website?

- A description of their research mission, goals, and programs
- Opportunities to sign up for email lists, including announcements of new funding opportunities
- Organizational Charts
- Abstracts of Funded Proposals
- Grant Policy Guides

Developing Your Ideas



- Who are you?
- Will you be a successful postdoctoral researcher?
 - Do you understand the research process?
 - Can you express yourself well?
- What are your personal short- and long-term scientific goals?
- What are your career goals with regard to scientific investigation?
- 5-10 year plan or 'horizon'



Some questions about which to think...

- What training opportunities does the research provide for you?
- What are you and your mentor/research group's competitive advantages?
- Are you (and your mentor/research group and collaborators) qualified to study this area?
- Does your institution have the resources to do the proposed work?
- What approach (approaches) will you take?

Communication



**“Agreed. We fund only those proposals
we can understand.”**

Communication

- What would you tell an educated, 'lay' person about your research area?
- What are your long- **and** short-term goals?
- Why do you want funding?
- What can you contribute to the funders/collaborators/faculty members interests/goals?
 - Be honest and realistic about work to be done and potential impact
 - How will your work further the field?

What **Competitive** Proposals do Well

- Clearly describe the training environment and how it supports an excellent career development plan
 - Quality of the advisor/advisee relationship and evaluate the trainees progress
- Demonstrate knowledge of subject area and literature
- Are tailored to the goals of the agency
- Address the **Big Picture**; clearly state why the proposed research is important, significant, and what it will contribute to the field.
- Do not promise too much

A Few General Tips

- **Read the instructions and solicitation!**
 - Read it again!
 - Read it again!
- Address gaps in your expertise
- Answer the questions you would have if you were reviewing the proposal
- Include relevant, quality graphics

Submitting your proposal



- For some agencies (e.g., NSF), you submit online
- For others (e.g., NIH), UC Merced Sponsored Research Services is the submitting entity
 - Contact Sponsored Research Services: proposals@ucmerced.edu for help
- **Either way, be familiar with website (and enrolled if necessary)
WELL in advance of the deadline**

Wait patiently...



When the verdict comes in...

- Celebrate!



Or...

- Make lemonade out of lemons...
 - Stay calm and respect the process
 - Review the critiques
 - Ask your mentor to review them also
 - Call and discuss with the Program Officer, if possible
 - Revise and resubmit! (to this or other agencies)



Thank You!

Questions?