Understanding NIH Individual Training Grants Step-By-Step

Dr. John Ryan, Associate Vice President for Research Development
Melissa Throckmorton, Coordinator of Research Development Services
Special Guest: Dr. Rebecca Martin, IRACDA Alumni,
NRSA Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Microbiology and Immunology
"It's a foolproof formula for writing grant applications."
Today We Will Cover…

• NIH Individual Training Grants (Fellowships) application deadlines
• Types of Fellowships
• Specifics and success rates of the F30, F31, and F32 funding mechanisms
• A step-by-step sample timeline to apply for the December 2017 deadline
• Required application components
• Required formatting requirements
• NIH Fellowship review criteria
• F32 post award payback agreement
• Your questions!
## NIH Fellowship Deadlines (new, renewal, resubmission)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Deadline</th>
<th>Scientific Merit Review</th>
<th>Advisory Council Review</th>
<th>Earliest Project Start Date</th>
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<td><strong>Cycle I</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>April 8</td>
<td>June – July</td>
<td>August or October</td>
<td>September or December</td>
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<td><strong>Cycle II</strong></td>
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<td>August 8</td>
<td>October – November</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>April</td>
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<td><strong>Cycle III</strong></td>
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<td>December 8</td>
<td>February - March</td>
<td>May</td>
<td>July</td>
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- **Cycle I**: April 8, June – July, August or October, September or December
- **Cycle II**: August 8, October – November, January, April
- **Cycle III**: December 8, February - March, May, July
NIH Individual Fellowships

1. F05: International Research Fellowships

2. **F30**: Ruth L. Kirschstein Individual Predoctoral National Research Service Award for MD/PhD and other Dual Degree Fellowships

3. **F31**: Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Award

4. **F32**: Ruth L. Kirschstein Postdoctoral Individual National Research Service Award

5. F33: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards for Senior Fellows

6. F37: Medical Informatics Fellowships

7. F38: Applied Medical Informatics Fellowships

8. F99/K00: Individual Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Fellow Transition Award

F30: Ruth L. Kirschstein Individual Predoctoral National Research Service Award for MD/PhD and other Dual Degree Fellowships

• Supports the integrated research and clinical training of predoctoral students.

• Must be enrolled in a combined MD/PhD or other dual-doctoral degree training program (e.g. DDS/PhD, AuD/PhD, DVM/PhD) and intend careers as physician-scientists or other clinician-scientists.

• Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

• Individuals may receive up to 6 years of aggregate Kirschstein-NRSA support at the predoctoral level for dual-degree training, including any combination of support from institutional training grants (e.g., T32) and an individual fellowship award. Over the total duration of F30 support, at least 50% of the award period must be devoted to graduate research training leading to the doctoral research degree.

PA-16-306: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Fellowship for Students at Institutions Without NIH-Funded Institutional Predoctoral Dual-Degree Training Programs (Parent F30)
## F30 2007-2016 Success Rates (All Institutes)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Overall Success Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>49%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>37%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>39%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>35%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>37%</td>
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</table>

**F31: Ruth L. Kirschstein Predoctoral Individual National Research Service Award**

- Supports predoctoral students to obtain mentored research training while conducting dissertation research.

- Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

- Individuals may receive up to 5 years of aggregate Kirschstein-NRSA support at the predoctoral level including any combination of support from institutional training grants (e.g., T32) and an individual fellowship award. This F31 award program only supports dissertation research training.

**PA-16-309: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Predoctoral Fellowship (Parent F31)**

**F31: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (Parent F31 - Diversity)**

- Supports the mentored research training of predoctoral students from underrepresented populations in the biomedical, behavioral, or clinical research workforce.

- Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

**PA-16-308: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award Individual Predoctoral Fellowship to Promote Diversity in Health-Related Research (Parent F31 - Diversity)**
Kirschstein-NRSA pre-doctoral fellowships (F31s)
Applications, awards, and success rates

Data and chart description for this slide can be located at
F32: Ruth L. Kirschstein Postdoctoral Individual National Research Service Award

• Supports the research training of postdoctoral candidates in scientific health-related research fields relevant to the missions of the participating NIH Institutes and Centers.

• Must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident.

• Up to 3 years of aggregate Kirschstein-NRSA support at the postdoctoral level, including any combination of support from institutional training grants (e.g., T32) and an individual fellowship award.

PA-16-307: Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award (NRSA) Individual Postdoctoral Fellowship (Parent F32)
Kirschstein-NRSA post-doctoral fellowships (F32s)
Applications, awards, and success rates

Data and chart description for this slide can be located at
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FY2016</th>
<th>Total Submitted</th>
<th>Resubmissions</th>
<th>Total Funded</th>
<th>Funded Resubmissions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F30</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>F31</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>F31 Diversity</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>F32</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
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</table>
Okay I Want To Apply Now What??

Step-By-Step Timeline
# Sample Application Timeline (December 2017 Deadline)

## Required Application Components and Tasks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Sept</th>
<th>Oct 1-15</th>
<th>Oct 16-31</th>
<th>Nov 1-15</th>
<th>Nov 16-30</th>
<th>Dec 1-7</th>
<th>Dec 4</th>
<th>Dec 8</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identify and Read the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)/Parent Announcement (PA) related to your application</td>
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<td>Notify Unit/College Research Administrator (RA) of intent to submit</td>
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<td>Obtain eRA Commons ID from Unit/College RA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Read <strong>ALL</strong> of the Fellowship Instructions for NIH and Other PHS Agencies <strong>SF424 (R&amp;R)</strong> and continue to reference during application preparation</td>
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<td>• Specific Aims (1p.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Applicant's Background/Goals for Fellowship Training (6pp.)</td>
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<td>• <strong>Identify NIH Institute, study section</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Research Strategy (6pp.)</td>
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<td>• <strong>Formally request reference letters</strong> (at least 3 are required; 5 max)</td>
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<td>• Budget</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Biosketch (All no more than 5pp.)</td>
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<td>• Mentor/Co-Mentor Biosketch (modified to include training)</td>
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<td>• If applicable, Consultant(s) biosketch and statement of work letter</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Sponsor/Co-Sponsor Statements (6pp.)</td>
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<td>• Training in Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) (1 page)</td>
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<td>• Respective Contributions (1 page)</td>
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<td>• Facilities &amp; Resources / Equipment (unlimited pages)</td>
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<td>• Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training (2pp.)</td>
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<td>• Cover Letter (Identify institute, study section, and list of references)</td>
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<td>• Applications for Concurrent Support (if applicable)</td>
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<td>• Data Sharing plan</td>
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<td>• Protection of Animal or Human Subjects (if applicable)</td>
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<td>• Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Planned Enrollment Report</td>
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<td>• Authentication of Key Biological/Chemical Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Project Summary/Abstract (30 lines)</td>
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<td>• Narrative (no more than 3 sentences)</td>
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All application information, forms, finalized budget, and components due to VCU Office of Sponsored Programs 5 days ahead of deadline

Submission Deadline
Application Components
Fellowship Applicant Section

Applicant’s Background and Goals for Fellowship Training

• Limited to 6 pages
• Content:
  1. Doctoral Dissertation and Research Experience;
  2. Training Goals and Objectives; and
  3. Activities Planned Under this award.
Application Components
Fellowship Applicant Section

Applicant’s Background and Goals for Fellowship Training

Doctoral Dissertation and Research Experience:

1. Briefly summarize your past research experience, results, and conclusions, and describe how that experience relates to the proposed fellowship (do not list academic courses in this section).

2. Applicants with no research experience: Describe any other scientific experiences.

3. Advanced graduate students (i.e., those who have or will have completed their comprehensive examinations by the time of award): Include a narrative of your planned doctoral dissertation (may be preliminary).

4. Postdoctoral fellowship applicants: Specify which areas of research were part of your predoctoral thesis or dissertation and which, if any, were part of a previous postdoctoral project.
Application Components
Fellowship Applicant Section

Applicant’s Background and Goals for Fellowship Training

Training Goals and Objectives:

1. Describe your overall training goals for the duration of the fellowship and how the proposed fellowship will enable the attainment of these goals.

2. Identify the skills, theories, conceptual approaches, etc. to be learned or enhanced during the award.

3. Discuss how the proposed research will facilitate your transition to the next career stage, if applicable.
Application Components
Fellowship Applicant Section

Applicant’s Background and Goals for Fellowship Training

Activities Planned Under this Award:

1. Describe, by year, the activities (research, coursework, professional development, clinical activities, etc.) you will be involved in during the proposed award. Estimate the percentage of time to be devoted to each activity (must total 100% for each year).

2. Describe the research skills and techniques that you intend to learn during the award period.

3. Describe the planned, non-research activities (e.g. those related to professional development and clinical activities) that you plan to engage in during the award period.

4. Provide a timeline detailing the proposed research training and related activities for the entire duration of the fellowship award.
Application Components
Research Training Plan Section

Specific Aims

• Limited to 1 page
• Content:

1. Goals of the proposed research.

2. Summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will have on the research field(s) involved.

3. List the specific objectives of the research proposed (e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology).
Application Components
Research Training Plan Section

Research Strategy

• Limited to 6 pages
• Content:
  1. Significance
     • Importance of the problem or critical barrier to progress that the proposed project addresses.
     • How the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice in one or more broad fields.
     • Describe how the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field will be changed if the proposed aims are achieved.

  2. Innovation: Not applicable except in the unusual circumstance where it is specified in the FOA.
3. Approach

- Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Unless addressed separately in the Resource Sharing Plan attachment, include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted *(Rigor/Reproducibility)* as well as any resource sharing plans as appropriate.

- Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.

- If the project is in the early stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work.

- Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised.
Application Components
Research Training Plan Section

Respective Contributions

• Limited to 1 page

• Content:

1. Describe the collaborative process between you and your sponsor/co-sponsor(s) in the development, review, and editing of this Research Training Plan.

2. Also discuss your roles in accomplishing the proposed research.
Application Components
Research Training Plan Section

Selection of Sponsor and Institution

- Limited to 1 page
- **Content:** describe the rationale/justification for the selection of both the sponsor and the institution.

1. Explain why the sponsor, co-sponsor (if any), and institution were selected to accomplish the research training goals. If the proposed research training is to take place at a site other than the applicant organization, provide an explanation here.

2. Foreign Institution. If you are proposing a research training experience at a foreign institution, describe how the foreign institution and sponsor offer special opportunities for training that are not currently available in the United States.

3. Postdoctoral and Senior Fellowship Applicants requesting training at their Doctorate or Current Institution: Training is expected to broaden a fellow's perspective. If requesting training at either your doctorate institution or any institution where you have been training for more than a year, you must explain why further training at that institution would be valuable.
Application Components
Research Training Plan Section

Training in Responsible Conduct of Research

• Limited to 1 page

• Content: The plan must address the five required instructional NIH RCR components:

  1. Format: Describe the required format of instruction (i.e., face-to-face lectures, coursework, and/or real-time discussion groups). A plan with only on-line instruction is not acceptable.

  2. Subject Matter: Describe the breadth of subject matter (e.g., conflict of interest, authorship, data management, human subjects and animal use, laboratory safety, research misconduct, and research ethics).

  3. Faculty Participation: Describe the role of the mentor(s) and other faculty involvement in the instruction.

  4. Duration of Instruction: Describe the total number of contact hours of instruction, taking into consideration the duration of the program.

  5. Frequency of Instruction: Instruction must occur during each career stage and at least once every four years. Document any prior instruction during the applicant’s current career stage, including the inclusive dates instruction was last completed.
Application Components
Sponsor(s), Collaborator(s), and Consultant(s) Section

Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements

• Limited to 6 pages
• Each sponsor and co-sponsor statement must address all of the following sections:

1. Research Support Available: list all current and pending research and research training support specifically available to the applicant for this particular training experience in table form: 1) funding source, 2) complete identifying number, 3) title of the research or training program, 4) name of the PD/PI, 5) start and end dates, and 6) the amount of the award.

2. Sponsor's/Co-Sponsor’s Previous Fellows/Trainees: state the total number of predoctoral and postdoctoral individuals previously sponsored. Select up to five that are representative, and for those five, provide information on their time spent in the lab, their present employing organizations, and their present position titles or occupations.
3. **Training Plan, Environment, Research Facilities:** describe the Research Training Plan that you have developed specifically for the fellowship applicant, including: 1) classes, seminars, opportunities for interaction with other groups and scientists, and any professional skills development opportunities; 2) the research environment and available research facilities and equipment; 3) the relationship of the proposed research training to the applicant's career goals; 4) the skills and techniques that the applicant will learn. Relate these to the applicant's career.

4. **Number of Fellows/Trainees to be Supervised During the Fellowship:** indicate how many pre- and/or post- doctoral fellows/trainees the Sponsor/Co-sponsor is expected to supervise during the award period. Co-sponsor statements must also include this information.
5. **Applicant's Qualifications and Potential for a Research Career:** describe how the fellowship applicant is suited for this research training opportunity based on his/her academic record and research experience level. Include information about how the Research Training Plan, and your own expertise as the sponsor or co-sponsor, will assist in producing an independent researcher.
Application Components
Sponsor(s), Collaborator(s), and Consultant(s) Section

Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants

• Limited to 6 pages

• Content:
  1. If any collaborators, consultants, or advisors are expected to make substantive contributions to the fellow’s planned project and research training, attach letters of support from those individuals here, describing their anticipated role and contributions.
Application Components

Letters of Reference

At least 3, but no more than 5 reference letters are required.

• The letters should be from individuals not directly involved in the application, but who are familiar with the applicant’s qualifications, training, and interests.

• The sponsor/co-sponsor(s) of the application cannot be counted toward the three required references.

• Make sure you include a list of referees in the application cover letter (including name, departmental affiliation, and institution) so that the NIH staff will be aware of planned reference letter submissions.

• Referees must submit reference letters through the eRA Commons by the application due date.

• Reference letter instructions and submission process.
Application Components
Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training Section

Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training

• Limited to 2 pages (includes the Additional Educational Information required for F30 and F31 applications)

• Content:
  1. Document a strong, well-established research program related to the candidate's area of interest. Describe opportunities for intellectual interactions with other investigators, including courses offered, journal clubs, seminars, and presentations. Indicate the facilities and other resources that will be made available for both career enhancement and the research proposed in this application.

  2. **F30 and F31 applications Additional Educational Information Required**: Describe the institution’s dual-degree (F30) or graduate (F31) program in which the applicant is enrolled. This description should include the structure of the program, the required milestones and their usual timing, the number of courses, any teaching commitments or qualifying exams, and the average time to degree over the past 10 years. Describe the progress/status of the applicant in relation to the program’s timeline, and the frequency and method by which the program formally monitors and evaluates a student’s progress.
Additional Required Application Components

Project Summary/Abstract

• 30 lines of text

• Content:
  1. Broad, long-term objectives and specific aims;
  2. Relevance of your research to the mission of the agency;
  3. Description of the research design;
  4. Methods for achieving the stated goals.
Additional Required Application Components

Project Narrative

• No more than 3 sentences

• Content:

1. If any collaborators, consultants, or advisors are expected to make substantive contributions to the fellow’s planned project and research training, attach letters of support from those individuals here, describing their anticipated role and contributions.
Additional Required Application Components

• **Biographical Sketch**: Maximum of 5 pages

• Bibliography/References Cited

• Care and Use of Vertebrate Animals in Research

• **Facilities & Other Resources**: describe the scientific environment in which the research will be done and the institutional facilities and resources available to the applicant (e.g., resources for classes, travel, or training; career development support; logistical support; financial support/protected time). The information provided is of major importance in establishing the feasibility of the goals of the fellowship training plan.

• **Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children in Research**: address plans to include subjects from both genders, all racial and ethnic groups (and subgroups), and children, as appropriate, for the scientific goals of the research, as well as plans for the recruitment and retention of subjects.
Additional Required Application Components

• **Protection of Human Subjects:** address plans to assure human subjects are protected, articulate the risk(s) to human subjects in the research and the protections in place to guard against those risk(s).

• **Data Sharing Plan**

• **Planned Enrollment Report Table**

• **Equipment:** List major items of equipment already available for this project and, if appropriate, identify the equipment's location and pertinent capabilities.
Additional Required Application Components

Cover Letter

• Allows you to specify your desired study section assignment and provide the names of any potential reviewers that may have a conflict of interest and should not be considered as reviewers of your application.

• You must include a list of your referees in the application cover letter (including name, departmental affiliation, and institution) so that the NIH staff will be aware of planned reference letter submissions.

• [Cover letter instructions and sample](#)
Required Formatting Requirements

- **Font size:** Must be 11 point or larger. Smaller text may be used in figures, graphs, diagrams and charts but must be legible when viewed at 100%.

- **Line Spacing:** No more than 6 lines per vertical inch (usually single-spacing is used).

- Page Margins: Must be at least .5 inches.

- **Recommended fonts:** Arial (not Arial Narrow), Georgia, Helvetica, Palatino Linotype.

- Hyperlinks and URLs may only be used when specifically noted in the FOA; may not be used to provide additional application information not in the proposal; and reviewers are not obligated and cautioned against reviewing hyperlinks.

- Digital images must be included in the Research Strategy. Do not include figures or photographs as separate attachments or appendices.
# Review Criteria At-A-Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Impact</th>
<th>Overall Impact/Merit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scored Review Criteria</strong> (Scored Individually and considered in overall impact score)</td>
<td>✓ Fellowship Applicant</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓ Sponsors, Collaborators, and Consultants</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓ Research Training Plan</td>
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<tr>
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<td>✓ Training Potential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Institutional Environment &amp; Commitment to Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Review Criteria</strong> (Not scored individually, but considered in overall impact score)</td>
<td>✓ Protections for Human Subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>✓ Inclusion of Women, Minorities, &amp; Children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>✓ Vertebrate Animals</td>
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<td>✓ Biohazards</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Resubmission</td>
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<td>• Renewal</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Review Considerations</strong> (Not scored individually and not considered in overall score)</td>
<td>✓ Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research</td>
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<td>• Applications from Foreign Organizations</td>
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<td>• Select Agents</td>
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<td>• Resource Sharing Plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓ Budget &amp; Period of Support</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Additional Comments to Applicant</strong></td>
<td>Additional Comments to Applicant</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
NRSA Payback Agreement Requirement

• All NRSA postdoctoral trainees and fellows incur a payback obligation during their first year of support.

• Your second year of training pays back the first year (each month of qualifying training activity = payback for one month of NRSA support).

• Trainees and fellows who receive the two full years of NRSA training fulfill their payback obligation at the end of the second year of NRSA research training.

• Payback activities are any health-related research or teaching that averages at least 20 hours per week, including: 1) dissertation-related research, 2) clinical teaching, or 3) research during the pursuit of a medical education. Research and teaching duties may include time spent in the laboratory and/or classroom, teaching preparation (up to three hours of preparation for each hour of direct instruction).

• Waivers are rare and only granted for medical reasons.

• Predoctoral NRSA trainees or fellows do not incur a payback obligation.

https://researchtraining.nih.gov/resources/information
Questions?

Best of Luck!