K99/R00 Grants: insights into the review process and what reviewers look for

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American Heart Association Early Career Symposium

Scientific Sessions 2015

Get your game plan in place

- When to submit – timing is critical – small window

- Leave time for A1 resubmission if possible

- Several "chefs in the kitchen" – select carefully

You need to feed the chefs!

Question: What are the key sections of your proposal?

- Candidate/PI
- Career Development Plan/Career Goals & Objectives
- Research Plan
- Mentor(s), Co-Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s)
- Environment & Institutional Commitment to the Candidate

Answer = <u>ALL</u> sections receive emphasis during the review and discussion!

*Actually read the instructions and <u>criteria</u> for each section!

Candidate/PI

- Biosketch – collect examples from PIs and peers

  - *Productivity record* – quantity vs quality
    - First author and contributing author
    - Avoid large gaps if possible

- Include any leadership positions or activities

- *Reference letters* – meet with your referees, bring your CV and career goals for discussion and *highlight key points*

Career Development Plan (applicant)

- Your plan for guidance and expanding your skill set (K99 phase)
  - *Scheduled meetings with mentor and mentoring team*
  - Ongoing presentations – lab or department
  - Other learning/didactic opportunities (workshops, courses)
  - Conference presentations planned – be specific
  - Grant agencies/mechanisms you will seek (R00 phase)

Important: Communicate this plan with your mentor and team well in advance and make sure you are all on the *SAME PAGE*

Career Goals & Objectives (applicant)

- Your vision of your future during your K99 <u>and</u> R00 years

- How you will develop the skills to transition to independence?
    - Developing *writing*, presentation and managerial skills
    - The type of position you will ultimately seek
    - Clearly and confidently state your vision of your <u>independence</u> and share the vision with your mentor(s)

Career Development Plan (Mentor)

- "Comprehensive" training plan in mentored K99 phase

    - How will applicant benefit from *mentor's lab*, as well as departmental or institutional resources

    - How will the members of the *mentoring team* assist in the development of the applicant? (be specific!)

    * Assurance that the applicant is working on a project that can be *independently developed as a new PI* *

Research Plan

- Simple and logical – *Experts and non-experts* all contribute to the review and discussion
- Outline *big picture* – effective use of schematics, models
- Clearly separate and organize the aims, hypotheses and approaches *into distinct portions for K99 vs. R00 years*

- Proofreading
    - Written English/grammatical errors can be very distracting ☹

- Aesthetics - formatting of figures, legends and sub-sections
    - make these consistent, logical and easy to follow

Ask several people for help in advance

Mentors, Co-mentors, Consultants

- Biosketches – <u>Mentor</u> and Co-mentors must submit

  - Ample support for applicant during K99 years
    - *Grant funding, space, environment for career development of candidate*
    - Productivity record
    - Collaborations to support candidate

  - *Track record of mentoring, previous trainees*

Environment and Institutional Commitment

- Having tons of equipment and lab space is nice, but…

  - Support for animal experimentation, core facilities, administrative assistance (grants office)

  - Intellectual environment

- *Letter of commitment from Chair/Director is essential*

Review Process and Meeting: Reviewer's Timeline

- 6-10 weeks before review meeting: confirm availability and attendance

- 4-6 weeks before: assignments sent to reviewers

  - *6-8 applications per reviewer, 80-110 pages each*

- 48 hours before – post preliminary scores and full critiques

- Half of applications are streamlined (aka triaged, unscored)

Day(s) of Meeting – how it unfolds

- Introductions and instructions – Program officers, staff, reviewers

  - Applications reviewed in random order by application number

  - Reviewers 1-3 state their initial scores of application (1-9)

    - *Thorough discussion for EVERY application* regardless of initial scores, led by reviewers 1-3 and panel Chair

    - Discussion and *questions from entire panel* is encouraged

    - Assistance may be requested

- Reviewers 1-3 give final scores verbally, all others vote electronically

Conclusions and Recommendations

- Start early – gather information and advice at beginning

- Be thorough and meticulous in <u>ALL</u> sections

- Communicate often with your mentor and support team

- Get feedback on all sections, leave time for revisions

- Have a team of proofreaders reserved for deadline

R00 rocks!