Applying for a Postdoctoral Fellowship

1. NSF Fellowships
2. Alternative Programs
3. Faculty Grants

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I. NSF Postdoc Fellowships

Goal:

To provide support for career transition:

- Immediately following earned doctorate (up to 2 or 3 yrs)
- To full time professional position as independent researcher or teaching faculty
- Strong emphasis on research, but growing emphasis on teaching
- Fellowships designed for a greater leadership role than typical under a PI grant

Eligibility requirements

Proposals must be submitted by individuals who:

- Are citizens or permanent residents (green card)
  (Exception: NATO Partner countries—there are many!)
- Current grad student, or PH. D. for 3 yrs or less
- Present integrated research and education plans
- Select a host program different from degree-granting school (some exceptions)
- Not be a named participant on any current NSF proposal

Note:
Eligible disciplines vary from year to year—check NSF web pages !

Current NSF Postdoctoral Fellowships:

www.nsf.gov/funding/education.jsp?org=DRL&fund_type=3

Stipend and Allowances

(Note: Varies by program!)

EX: Earth Sciences (EAR-PF)

- Period of support: 2 years
- Total budget: $87,000/yr
  - Stipends: $62,000
  - Research, office, travel, insurance: $25,000

Note: No other appointment or remuneration may be accepted from any source!

Writing your proposal

1. NSF Cover Page
2. Project Summary (1 page)
   - Host institution
   - Sponsoring scientist(s)
   - **Overview**
   - **Intellectual Merit**
   - **Broader Impacts**
3. Project Description (10 pp.) Details on:
   - Research and education activities
   - Justify choice of institution and sponsor(s)
   - Long term career goals & role of fellowship
4. References cited
5. Biographical sketch (2 pp. NSF format)

Intellectual Merit – 5 strands

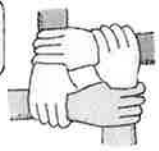
1) How important is the proposed activity to **advancing knowledge and understanding** within its own field or across different fields?*
2) How **well qualified** is the proposer to conduct the project?
3) To what extent does the proposed activity explore **creative, original, or POTENTIALLY TRANSFORMATIVE CONCEPTS**?
4) How **well conceived and organized** is the proposed activity?
5) Is there sufficient **access to necessary resources?**

**Strongest emphasis as of Jan. 2013; must be linked to "societal benefits" theme of Broader Impacts*

Broader Impacts – 5 strands

1. What may be the potential **benefits to society**?*
2. How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while **promoting teaching, training and learning**? ("Education")
3. How well does the proposed activity **broaden the participation of women and underrepresented groups**? ("Diversity")
4. To what extent will it **enhance the infrastructure for research and education**, such as facilities, instrumentation, and collaborations?
5. Will the results be **disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding**?

**Strongest emphasis as of Jan. 2013; must be linked to "advancing knowledge" theme of Intellectual Merit*



Examples:
http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/broaderimpacts.pdf

Educational Component
(Note: Varies by program!)

EX: Earth Sciences Fellowship (EAR-PF):

- Guideline: 10% - 25% of total effort
- Examples:
  - Teaching one course each year at host institution
  - Developing educational materials (formal or informal)
  - Engaging in outreach or public education
- Strongly recommended: Work this out with host institution!

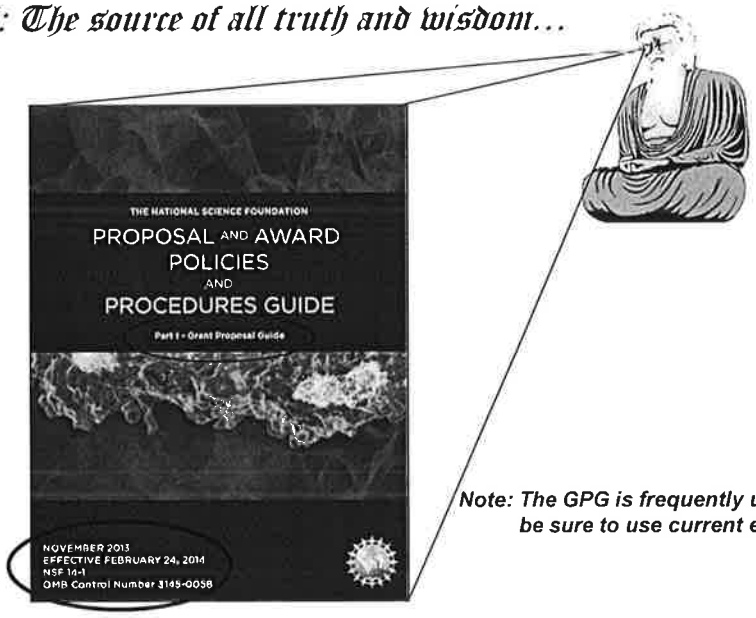
Writing your proposal, cont'd

6. Current & Pending Support (other applications)

7. Commitment letter
   - Signed by sponsoring scientist & dept. chair
   - Affirm approval of proposal
   - Commit adequate facilities & other support
   - Discuss role of sponsor as mentor & opportunities for research/training
   - If more than one host institution, same information

8. Letters of recommendation (for some programs)

GPG: The source of all truth and wisdom…



Note: The GPG is frequently updated; be sure to use current edition!

Note: These are commandments, not suggestions!

Crafting a Successful Proposal

Provide clear, concise answers to key questions:

- *Why is this study important?*
- *Are the experiments feasible?*
- *What will be accomplished?*
- *How will it change the field?*

Crafting a Successful Proposal

Design a clear experimental plan:

- Devise a concise **goal statement**, followed by 2 – 5 specific and measurable **research objectives**)
- Keep rest of proposal **focused** on this structure
- Describe **outcomes**: What will you learn?
- Anticipate **pitfalls**; outline **alternatives**
- Provide a **timeline**: Limit experiments to what can be accomplished within the time period

Tips for Best Reference Letters

- Develop effective working relationships with potential referees
- Keep your referees updated on your progress
- Make your referees' job easy, provide:
  - Current CV, reprints of papers
  - Draft of proposal

Remember: This is a personal and professional relationship that may last your entire career!

Submitting your proposal

1. Register on FastLane (not Grants.gov!)
   www.fastlane.nsf.gov/fastlane.jsp
2. Click on "Postdoctoral Fellowships and Other Programs"
3. Click on "Individual Registration"
4. After registration, go back and click on "I am an applicant"
5. Select Fellowship program and follow instructions
6. Stuck? Get help from Research Office!

Alternative Postdoc Programs

Web pages:

- InfoED Spin Plus: http://infoedglobal.com/
- COS/Pivot http://pivot.cos.com/
- Grants.Gov: www.Grants.gov
- Vanderbilt U:

  http://as.vanderbilt.edu/supportservices/grantopportunities/

Great Portal…

- Comprehensive listing for faculty & grad students
- Pre- and postdoc fellowships & grants
- Jr faculty awards
- Dissertation support
- Travel support
- Residency opportunities

http://as.vanderbilt.edu/supportservices/grantopportunities/

III. Faculty Grants

1. Faculty researchers frequently include postdoctoral appointments in their grant proposals
2. Candidates are normally identified beforehand
3. NSF now requires a "Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan" for <u>all</u> proposals identifying and budgeting for a postdoc

Hint:
Be proactive, work with faculty member on grant proposal and Mentoring Plan!

Remember...

"The meek may inherit the earth, but not the grant dollars."
- J. Paul Getty