The F99/K00 D-SPAN Award Webinar

• Thank you for joining the webinar. We will begin shortly.
• Listen to the webinar via your computer speakers or dial in using the telephone number provided on the screen.
• Type any questions into the Q&A box. Questions will be addressed after the presentation.
• The recording and webinar resource materials will be available in a few weeks.
Diversity Specialized Predoctoral to Postdoctoral Advancement in Neuroscience (D-SPAN) Award (F99/K00)
June 29, 2021
Questions

• You will be muted during the webinar
• Type your questions into the Q&A box
• Q&A will be at the end of the webinar
Outline of the Webinar

• Speakers
• Introduction to the D-SPAN Program
• F99/K00 Application Components
• Review Considerations
• Q&A
Speakers

Michelle Jones-London, PhD
Lauren Ullrich, PhD
Bill Benzing, PhD
Introduction to the D-SPAN Program
Goals of D-SPAN

• Create a defined pathway for a critical juncture in the training pipeline—the transition from predoc to postdoc.

• Encourage and retain outstanding, diverse graduate students who have demonstrated ability and interest in careers as independent neuroscience researchers.

• Spans career stages to
  • minimize transition barriers
  • enhance self-efficacy by providing a clear pathway to the postdoc
  • empower diverse trainees to develop independent research plans within a strong, mentored environment
Dual-Phase Funding

• 1-2 years of support for completing PhD dissertation (F99) at current (US) institution

• Up to 4 years of support for postdoctoral training (K00) at any US institution
Scientific Focus

• D-SPAN is intended for individuals who have demonstrated an interest in a neuroscience research career in NIH Blueprint and/or BRAIN Initiative research areas.
  • Note that NIDCD participation is limited to BRAIN Initiative research areas only.

Participating NIH Institutes and Centers

• NEI
• NIA
• NIAAA
• NIBIB
• NICHD
• NIDCD
• NIDCR
• NIDA
• NIEHS
• NIMH
• NINDS
• NCCIH
PD/PI

• Graduate students from diverse backgrounds, including individuals from nationally underrepresented groups in neuroscience research (see Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity)
• Applicants must have 1-2 years left at time of award.
  • Usually 3rd or 4th year PhD students (later is ok, with justification)
  • Must be at the dissertation phase
• US citizen or permanent resident only
• Current F31 awardees and applicants are eligible
• May not be in a clinical, health-professional or dual-degree program
• MUST have mission relevance to one of the neuroscience institutes listed on FOA!
Transition from F99 to K00

• F99 phase must be at least 1 year, no more than 2 years. Except in unusual circumstances, F99 phase will not be extended.

• Transition is not automatic. You must submit a K00 application.

• To activate the K00 phase, you must have been offered and accepted a neuroscience-focused postdoctoral research position.
Before You Start

• **Define your career goals.** Explicitly define your career goals and area of research interest.

• **Outline the techniques, skills, knowledge, and relationships necessary to achieve your career goals.** Describe the scientific and professional skills you will need as a postdoctoral researcher and beyond.

• **Perform a skills “gap analysis.”** What skills from the above description have you already mastered? What skills need to be developed?

• **Define your research plan.** How will the two phases of your research (F99 and K00) build off your existing strengths to provide you with skills, techniques, and data that will facilitate your success as a postdoc and independent investigator? Provide a detailed timeline for training goals.

• **Build a training plan that is tailored to your needs.** What activities will you perform to develop your professional skills?

• **Assess guidance and mentorship needed.** What will you learn from each identified mentor; are all your areas of development covered?
Putting it All Together

• Tell a consistent story

• Many aspects of the application can feel duplicative; use this intentionally to reinforce key themes, expand on fruitful areas

• Get outside feedback
Tips

• Avoid these common errors!
  • Including unnecessary or irrelevant activities
  • “Generic” plan—list specific activities, *why* you’re doing them, and how they will advance you towards your goal
  • Mentor and mentee sections don’t match up
  • Poor grantsmanship – thoroughly proofread for typographical and grammatical errors

• Get advice from people with experience, but...
  • DO NOT just copy a training plan from other “successful” applications
  • Each person has a different background and is pursuing different goals
  • It should be written in your voice, not someone else’s
F99/K00 Application Components
General Guidance

• Use the resources on the website
• Read the entire FOA, including the review criteria
• Read the Fellowship (F) Instructions of the SF424 Application Guide
• You will follow the instructions in the FOA unless directed to the application guide, then use the F31
Special Instructions for the Application

• Use the SF424 (R&R) fellowship package
• The Specific Aims and Research Strategy Sections follow a non-traditional format.
• Major changes in the reissue are flagged on the Blueprint website
Letters of Reference

• Start NOW on Letters of Reference

• (How to Apply - Application Guide » Submission Process » Reference Letters)
  • Provide explicit instructions to your referees
  • 3 minimum, 5 maximum
  • Referees should not be directly involved in the application (not sponsor or co-sponsor)
  • Check the status of the letters often.
    • Late letters not accepted.
    • If letters are missing, application will not be reviewed.
Forms

Available at https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide.html

1. SF424 (R&R)
2. PHS Fellowship Supplemental Form
3. Research and Related (R&R) Senior/Key Person Profile (Expanded).
4. R&R Other Project Information.
5. Project/Performance Site Location(s).
6. PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information
SF424 Form 1 (Cover Sheet)

• Item 12
  • Start Date: the start of the F99 phase
    • The earliest start date is indicated in the FOA (F.200.12)
    • End Date: the end of the K00 phase (F.200.12)

• Item 15: Estimated Project Funding
  • Covers both phases
  • Use budget section of RFA (F.200.15)
  • Note Extraordinary Costs instructions for ADA accommodations

• Item 21: Cover Letter (F.200.21)
  • Include list of referees (including name, departmental affiliation, and institution)
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Part B
  • Applicant's Background and Goals for Fellowship Training (F430.2) (Fellowship Applicant Section)
    • Follow instructions in the FOA
    • Address both phases
    • Include career goals, timeline, and milestones
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Part C
  • Specific Aims (RFA)
  • Research Strategy (RFA)
  • Respective Contributions (F.430.5)
  • Selection of Sponsor and Institution
    • For F99 phase (F.430.6)
  • Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research (F.430.8)
Specific Aims Page

• All applicants must use these two Specific Aims:
  • Aim 1: The Dissertation Research Project
    • Provide a detailed description of the overall dissertation research project, what has been accomplished to date (preliminary data may be included), and the research to be completed in the F99 phase.
  • Aim 2: The Postdoctoral Research Direction
    • Identify the research direction to be pursued for the K00 phase.
Aim 1: The Dissertation Research Project

Significance

Overview of the dissertation research. The Research Strategy should offer a clearly stated rationale and hypothesis, go beyond just experimental details, and provide perspective about the work's expected outcomes and significance.

Approach

The Approach for this Aim should be organized into two sections:

1. A progress report on the dissertation research project thus far
2. A detailed research proposal for the work to be completed in the F99 phase, including research and career development milestones for the transition from the F99 phase of the award to the K00 award phase.

Please pay close attention to caveats and alternative approaches!
Aim 2: The Postdoctoral Research Direction

Significance

• Describe a specific scientific question or observation that will be investigated. Explain the significance of and rationale for the K00 research direction.

• The postdoctoral research plan does not have to be a continuation or within scope of the predoctoral research but should have a logical connection to previous research experiences and must have relevance to participating NIH Blueprint research areas.

Approach

• Provide a general description of how the research will be conducted, including approaches and methodologies that could be used, anticipated results, challenges that might arise and how to address them (all broad strokes).

• Career and professional development skills to be acquired should also be detailed.

• Potential mentor(s) do not need to be identified, but a plan for identifying a mentor(s) should be included.
Research Strategy Section (6 pgs)

• Applicants should individually address the Significance and Approach for each Specific Aim.
• Relate each of the aims to your career goals
• Take a broad, bird’s-eye comprehensive viewpoint when writing this. Use a narrative style.
• Carefully consider the review criteria prior to writing
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements (F99 Phase; F430.9.A-E, RFA)
  • 6 pages total, inclusive of co-sponsors
  • Research Support Available
  • Sponsor/Co-Sponsor’s Previous Fellows/Trainees
  • Training Plan, Environment, Research Facilities
  • Number of Fellows/Trainees to be Supervised During the Fellowship
  • Applicant’s Qualifications and Potential for a Research Career
Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements
Training Plan, Environment, Research Facilities

• Individualized research training plan for the applicant using a gap analysis plan
• Coordinate the training plan with the applicant's Research Strategy and the goals.
• Describe how the sponsor will facilitate transition to the next stage and how research and career development progress will be monitored (frequency of interaction, benchmarks for progress, and roles for mentoring teams).
• Describe the research environment
• If the applicant is proposing to gain experience in a clinical trial as part of his or her research training, the sponsor or co-sponsor must include a statement about this.
• Describe the roles and responsibilities of sponsor and fellow, including contributions to the research plan and the relationship between the proposed research plan and funded or unfunded research projects previously devised by the sponsor.
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants (F.430.10)
  • Letters of Support are not the same as Reference Letters
    • Collaborators are people who will provide something you need for your research;
    • Biosketches of collaborators are optional, but are highly recommended.
  • Members of an Advisory Committee must provide letters of support
    • Include relevant information applicable to the fellow’s planned research training and future goals.

• Co-sponsor information belongs in the Sponsor Information section, not here.
## Definitions of Roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Senior/key personnel</th>
<th>Biosketch</th>
<th>Document</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PD/PI*</td>
<td>Applicant (you)</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Candidate statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsor*</td>
<td>Primary mentor</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Plans and Statements of Mentor and Co-Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Co-Sponsor</td>
<td>Secondary mentor</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>✔</td>
<td>Plans and Statements of Mentor and Co-Mentor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referee*</td>
<td>Writes reference letter; not directly involved in project</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Letter of Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborator</td>
<td>Plays an active role in the research</td>
<td>Usually not</td>
<td>Not required unless sr./key personnel</td>
<td>Letter of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultants</td>
<td>Provides advice or services</td>
<td>Usually not</td>
<td>Not required unless sr./key personnel</td>
<td>Letter of support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advisory Committee Members</td>
<td>Provides advice to the PI on research or professional progress</td>
<td>Usually not</td>
<td>Not required unless sr./key personnel</td>
<td>Letter of support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Required role

# Individuals who contribute in a substantive, meaningful way to the candidate’s career development or the career development project
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training (F.430.11)
  • In addition to the content described in the Application Guide, institutions must include the 6 bullets described in the FOA.
Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training

Educational Information

• Describe the institution's graduate program in which the applicant is enrolled.
  • Structure of the program, the required milestones and their usual timing,
  • The number of courses, any teaching commitments or qualifying exams,
  • Average time to degree over the past 10 years.
• Progress/status of the applicant in relation to the program's timeline
• Frequency and method by which the program formally monitors and evaluates a student's progress.
• Confirm that the applicant is in a PhD program in a neuroscience-relevant field (month/year of entry) and has reached the dissertation phase (month/year of transition).
• Confirm that the applicant has 1-2 years from time of award before completion of their PhD (month/year of anticipated graduation).
• Provide the name of the primary sponsor or mentor and an affirmation of the institution's commitment to the applicant's training and research career goals.
• Include the name of the individual providing this information at the end of the description.

This information is typically provided by the director of the graduate program or the department chair.
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Description of Candidate’s Contribution to Program Goals (F.430.12)

• The sponsoring institution must provide a document on institutional letterhead that explains how the candidate’s participation will further the goals of the D-SPAN to promote diversity in neuroscience research.

• See the Notice of NIH's Interest in Diversity.

• The attachment must be dated and signed by an institutional official. In most cases, this will be the dean or the chairman of the department.
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Other Research Training Plan Section
  • Human Subjects (F500)
  • Vertebrate Animals (F430)
  • Resource Sharing Plan (F430.16)
    • You must include this section.
    • Includes: 1) Data Sharing Plan; 2) Sharing Model Organisms; and 3) Genomic Data Sharing Plan.
  • Authentication of Key Biological and/or Chemical resources
  • Additional Information (Follow F430.18-25)
The PHS Supplemental Form

• Part G: Budget – be sure to check the box for tuition and fees (F430.26-28).
• Part H: Appendix – Do not use the Appendix to circumvent the page limitations.
R&R Senior/Key Person Profile

• Applicant (F.240)
  • Your role is PD/PI
  • Must have eRA Commons account and ORCID ID
  • Use the Predoctoral Fellowship Applicant Biographical Sketch http://grants.nih.gov/grants/forms/biosketch.htm
  • It is OK for fellows to list manuscripts in preparation, submitted, or in revision

• Sponsor (F.240)
  • Role is “Other Professional”
  • Enter “Sponsor” or “Co- Sponsor” in the Other Project Role category field.
Biographical Sketch

Applicant

- Include the start date (month/year) of all education/training experiences.
- Personal Statement
  - Use instructions for "applicants for dissertation research awards"
  - Include a description of career goals, intended career trajectory, and interest in NIH Neuroscience Blueprint or BRAIN Initiative research areas.
  - When relevant, account for factors that affected past productivity.
- Scholastic Performance
  - List undergraduate courses, but not grades.
  - Graduate courses and grades must be included.

Sponsor and Co-Sponsor(s)

- Personal Statement
  - Include a statement describing their past and current mentoring and training philosophy
  - Include commitment to diversity and inclusion in training environment.
R&R Other Project Information

- R&R Other Project Information (F.220 and RFA)

6. International activities
   - Although foreign institutions are not allowed to apply, foreign components are permitted

7. Project Summary/Abstract (both phases)
8. Project Narrative (both phases)
9. Bibliography & References Cited
10. Facilities & Other Resources (F99 phase)
11. Equipment (F99 phase)
Project/Performance Site Location(s) (F230)

• List ALL sites where research will be done
• Typically, the primary site is the same as the submitting institution
• If you are doing research at an affiliate site, include the affiliate as a secondary site.
PHS Human Subjects and Clinical Trials Information (F500)

• All applicants must use the Human Subjects form regardless of your answer to the question “Are human subjects involved?”

• Follow instructions in F.500
  • Do not provide an NCT# in Section 1, item 1.5.
  • Do not complete Section 4 – Protocol Synopsis information or Section 5 – Other Clinical Trial-related Attachments.

• Clinical Trials are not allowed. Experience in a sponsor’s clinical trial is allowed.
Letter of Intent

• Indicate intent to submit an application, via email, to NINDS Diversity Training@mail.nih.gov

Include the following information:

• Descriptive title of proposed activity
• Name(s), address(es), and telephone number(s) of the PD(s)/PI(s)
• Names of primary sponsor and other key personnel
• Participating institution(s)
• Number and title of this funding opportunity

More than one person may apply from any institution.
Review Considerations
After You Have a Draft...

• Carefully check what you have written against the Scored Review Criteria
  • Applicant
  • Sponsors, Collaborators, and Consultants
  • Research Training Plan
  • Training Potential/Development Plan
  • Institutional Environment & Commitment to Training
Additional Considerations

• Ensure that the emphasis of the proposal should be on the training plan, mentors and collaborators who will assist in the training, as well as how the thesis research training will prepare the applicant for their future career development.

• Check and correct for grammatical errors and typos.

• Have someone unfamiliar with your research proof for overall grantsmanship and for ambiguous sentences or statements.
Post-Submission Materials

Post-submission materials must be received by the SRO by 30 calendar days prior to the peer review meeting.

Excerpted Allowable Post-Submission Materials

- News of an article accepted for publication since submission of the application.
- New funding for the Sponsor/Mentor.
- Change in Mentor(s) or other Senior/Key Persons specified in the original application.
- Biographical sketches (e.g., due to the hiring, replacement, or loss of an investigator).
- Letters of support or collaboration due to the hiring, replacement or loss of an investigator.
PHS Submission Form

• You do not need to fill out an assignment request form or indicate an IC/study section
• All D-SPAN applications are reviewed in the same study section
• The panel has diverse neuroscience expertise
Questions?

Initial Point of Contact:
Michelle Jones-London, PhD or
Lauren Ullrich, PhD
NINDS
NINDSDiversityTraining@mail.nih.gov