Getting Started Guide: Preparing an Individual NRSA Application

This job aid provides an overview of the administrative components required for an individual NIH National Research Service Award (NRSA) fellowship proposal and helpful hints to facilitate the proposal submission process.

What is an Individual NRSA?
A part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Research Training and Career Development Program, Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Awards (NRSAs) provide training opportunities for individuals at various stages of education and training, beginning at the baccalaureate level and through the postdoctoral phase. NRSA fellowships granted to individuals fall under the “F Series” of funding opportunities (i.e. activity codes F05, F30, F31, F32, F33, F99/K00). For more information about NRSA Fellowships, visit the NIH Individual Fellowship page at: https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/fellowships

Who is a Fellow?
For the purposes of this job aid, a Fellow includes postdoctoral scholars or graduate students.

The Fellow as PI
Since the Principal Investigator (PI) for an individual NRSA proposal is the Fellow, some additional items may be required from the Fellow, which is different from cases when the Fellow’s mentor serves as the PI of the proposal.

Requirements prior to submission:

1) Confirm that reference letters are submitted on time: Keep in mind that submission of reference letters is not verified by OSR pre-submission because the letters are NOT sent with the application package assembled in InfoEd. Rather, they are submitted separately by each referee via eRA Commons. If reference letters are not submitted by the due date of the proposal, NIH will reject the application.

2) Request access for the PI submission role in Commons: In some cases a Fellow may have an existing Commons account, such as from an institutional training grant, but the previously assigned role(s) for the account will likely NOT work for submission of an Individual NRSA. The Commons account needs to be correctly affiliated with the “PI” role. To request the PI role affiliation for an account, submit a Commons request form to the Office for Sponsored Research (OSR) Info Team: https://osr.northwestern.edu/content/era-commons-request-form.

3) Request access to approve proposals in InfoEd: Depending on the current type of appointment at the University, the Fellow may not be in InfoEd. The Fellow’s InfoEd account needs to be correctly affiliated with approving proposals. To request InfoEd affiliation for a Fellow, submit an InfoEd Help request form to the OSR Info Team: https://osr.northwestern.edu/content/info-team-help-request. Be sure to include the NetID and the employee or SES ID of the student.

4) Complete Conflict of Interest (COI) Training and Disclosure Requirements in eDisclosure: COI training and disclosure requirements must be completed BEFORE submission of a proposal may occur. Once a proposal is created in InfoEd with the Fellow listed as the PI:
   o A profile for the Fellow will be automatically created and they will gain access to eDisclosure
   o The proposal will show up in eDisclosure, and training dates can be verified
   [Note: A Fellow may have never been subject to COI requirements before and consequently may not have pre-existing access to eDisclosure. If the Fellow would like to complete COI requirements BEFORE the proposal is created in InfoEd but they are unable to log into eDisclosure with their NetID and password, Northwestern University Conflict of Interest Office (NUCOI) can create a profile for them. To request an eDisclosure profile, send the Fellow’s name, NetID, and email address to nucoi@northwestern.edu.]

Tips:

- Be proactive! Provide information to referees early and follow up with them to ensure that reference letters are submitted no later than the due date of the proposal. For more information about reference letters, visit: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/submission-process/reference-letters.htm

- Submit systems requests ASAP: Specific roles are required in both Commons and InfoEd accounts. While most requests are completed in 1-2 days, same-day turn-around is not guaranteed, and on occasion creation of a new eRA Commons account can take up to five days.

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