

Review Criteria for AHA Postdoctoral Fellowships

Success rate for 2016-2017: 14.2% (78 of 551)

Eligibility: Doctoral degree and ≤ 5 years of postdoc training
US citizen, permanent resident, or visa holder

Budget: NIH postdoc stipend + \$3,000

Review criteria:

I. Quality of the applicant (1/3 of score)

- 1) Academic record
- 2) Career plans congruent with the AHA's mission (personal statement section of the biosketch).
- 3) Quality of previous research (publication history)
- 4) Quality of the 3 reference letters (critical)

II. Quality of the sponsor and institution (1/3 of score)

- 1) Quality of sponsor's publications and funding (past and current)
- 2) Sponsor's track record with trainees
- 3) Quality of the sponsor's training plan
 - Clarify the role of the applicant in the development of the proposal
 - Relationship of the proposed project to ongoing research in the sponsor's lab
 - How will the project contribute toward the career development of the applicant?
 - Trainee's career goals (outlined in the personal statement of the biosketch) must match the sponsor's training plan (complimentary and focused on the individual). Trainee might need to draft the sponsor's training plan.
- 4) Quality of lab resources and institutional environment
 - Include evidence of institutional support (What does THI offer toward trainee development?)

III. Quality of the proposal (1/3 of score)

Write so that a non-cardiovascular life scientist can understand.

- 1) Specific Aims (rule of thumb is 2 specific aims for a 2-yr postdoc fellowship)
 - Project: high quality science, important topic, concise/focused/simple
 - Hypothesis-driven research
 - Mechanistic, not descriptive. Developing a new technology is risky.
 - Supportive preliminary data
 - Specific aims should be interconnected, but not dependent
 - Each aim should have a stand-alone hypothesis (otherwise, it's probably "descriptive").
 - Use resources already available to you (i.e. Don't propose to make a new genetically-engineered mouse).

2) Background and Significance

- Importance of the topic to the mission of the AHA.
- Discussion of relevant literature
- What is still unknown and why is it important to understand it?
- If possible, include a model (diagram) of your working hypothesis.
- State the overall hypothesis to be tested and the objectives.

3) Preliminary Studies

- Include some preliminary data. It can be supporting of your hypothesis or proof that your technology works. New fellows may use preliminary data generated by the sponsor.

4) Research Design and Methods

- Organization of each specific aim: Rationale, Experimental design, Interpretation of results/alternative approaches, Significance (clearly state the significance and impact of the work).
- Include a timeline (proof that you thought about how long this will take to complete).

5) Ethical Aspects of the Proposed Research

- Describe any special consideration you have given to all ethical issues involved in your proposed investigations (biohazards, human subjects, animal models, etc.). Identify risks and explain management. If using vertebrate animals, indicate "A description of the care and use of <species> is provided in the 'Vertebrate Animal Subjects' document. Discuss the nature of the informed consent that will be obtained if the research involves human subjects.

Notes:

Include instruction in responsible conduct in research (RCR).