The Individual Development Plan

Applicant Background & Goals

Letters of Recommendation

March 22, 2021

IDP leads to Applicant Background & Goals

For all Fellowship (F) Applications

Section of Application	Page Limits * (if different from FOA, FOA supersedes)
Project Summary/Abstract	30 lines of text
Project Narrative	Three sentences
Introduction to Resubmission or Revision Application (when applicable)	1
Applicant's Background and Goals for Fellowship Training	6
✓ **Specific Aims**	1
✓ **Research Strategy**	6
Respective Contributions	1
Selection of Sponsor and Institution	1
Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research	1
Sponsor and Co-Sponsor Statements	6
Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants	6
Description of Institutional Environment and Commitment to Training Note: This page limit includes the Additional Educational Information required for F30 and F31 applications.	2
Applications for Concurrent Support (when applicable)	1
✓ **Biographical Sketch**	5

Applicant Background and Goals

Applicant Background and Goals (6 pages)
mention the IDP

Three sections:

- Doctoral Dissertation and Research Experience (similar but longer than NIH biosketch)
- Training Goals and Objectives (organize around NPA competencies)
- Activities Planned Under this Award (including timetable for each year)

Shares similarities with sponsor's training plan

Organize around Research Competencies

- **Discpline-specific conceptual knowledge and critical thinking**
  Ex. coursework, qualifier exam, journal club, clinical experience
- **Research skill development including computational skills and data management**
  Ex. Core facility workshops, lab experience, biostatistics
- **Communication skills, oral, written and lay public**
  Ex. career courses, journal club, meetings
- **Professionalism, respect, reflect values of workplace and profession**
  Ex. Outreach, service, promote discipline, journal club, authorship
- **Leadership, management and team science skills, including collaboration**
  Ex. Collaborations, overseeing students
- **Ethics and responsible conduct of research**
  Ex. Coursework, lab interactions, IACUC, IRB, manage conflict of interest

Applicant Background and Goals

What strengths and weaknesses do you have right now?
What do you need to learn to do the research?
What do you need to learn for your career goals?
Who will teach you those things, and how?
What is your timeline for your research career development?

Goal-Setting

What are your professional goals?

How are your activities related to your goals?

Do you need more information to achieve your goals?

It is all about you

The work in graduate school is not intrinsically difficult. You are smart enough to do this.

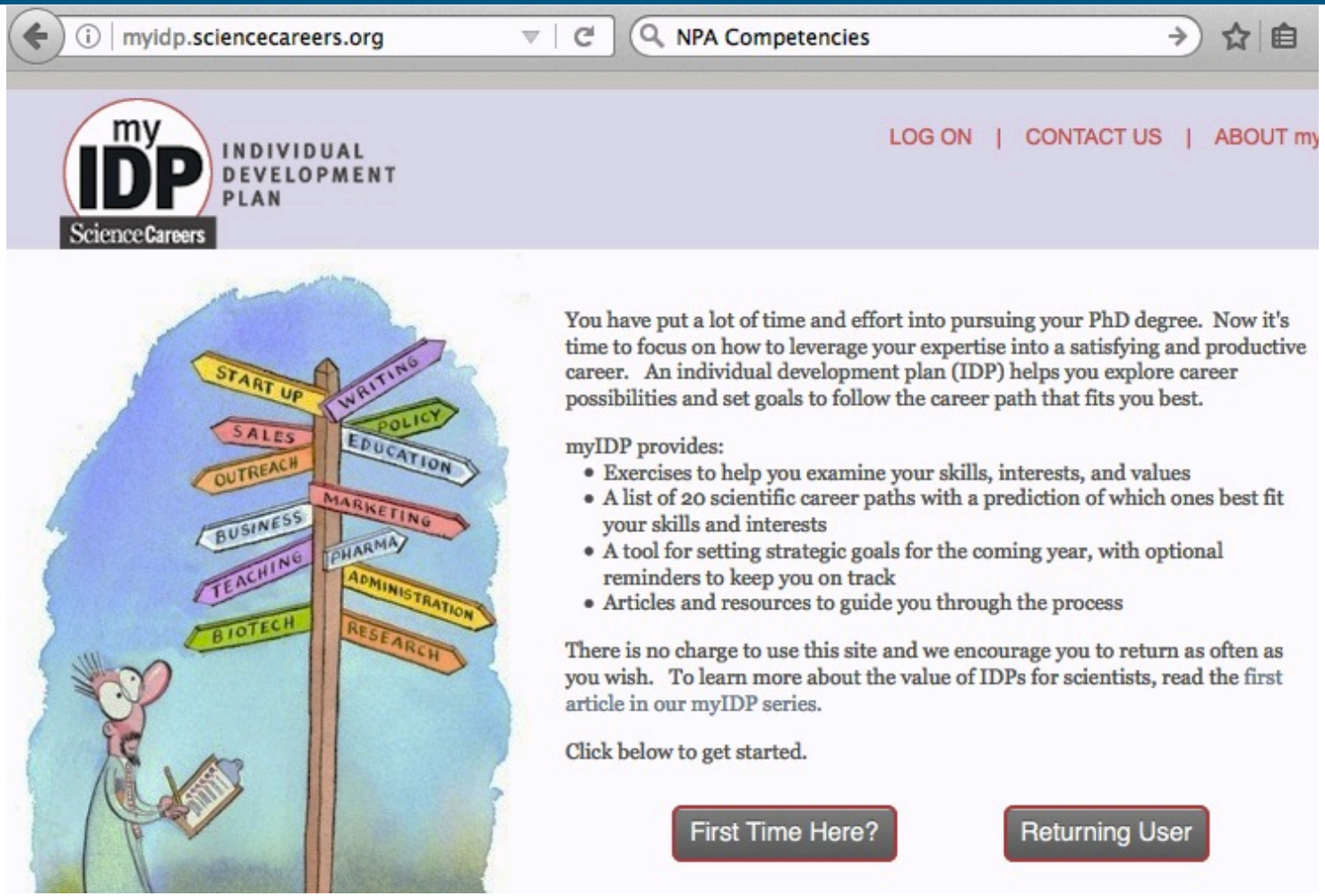
What IS difficult is often the lack of structure, supervision, and help, both emotional and practical

There may not be much direct guidance, and most of the structure (and timing) is up to you

Some trainees flounder, waiting in vain for someone to tell them what to do.

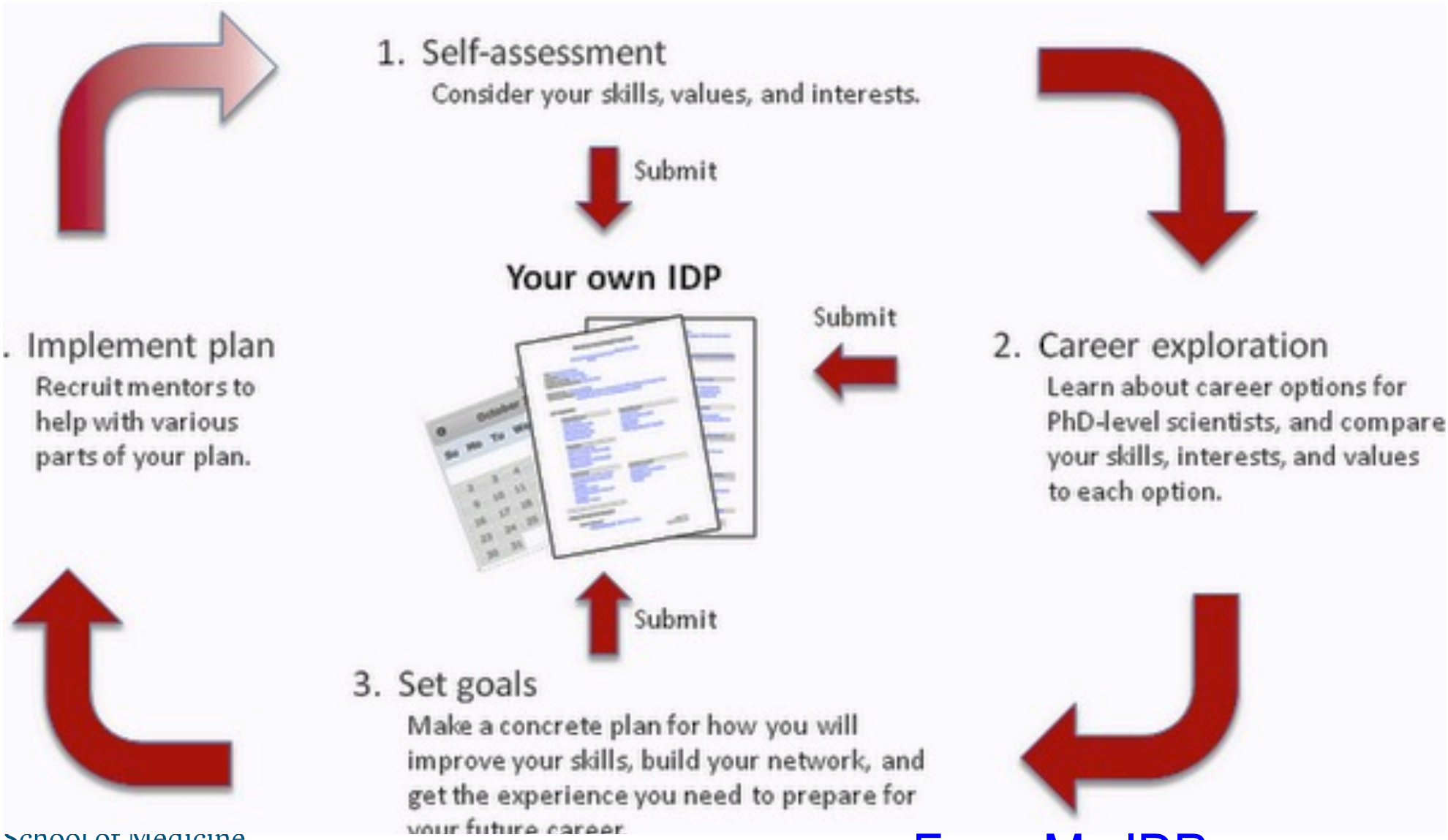
You need to take charge. You need a plan.

My IDP—Linked to Science Careers



Model IDP developed by
Federation of American Societies for Exp. Biology
http://www.faseb.org/portals/0/pdfs/opa/idp.pdf.

An Individual Development Plan: My IDP



From My IDP

1. Self-Assessment

Solid career decisions depend on understanding you--the skills you possess, what interests excite you, and what values add meaning to your life.

- GW Center for Career Services https://careerservices.gwu.edu/career-exploration-assessment offers self assessment tools and services

- Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) will help you to understand your preferences

Skills & Competency Assessments

- Excellent way to look at career/professional development
- Skills employers and/or educational institutions seek

Use NPA competencies to organize training

National Postdoc Association Core Competency Checklist

NPA Research Competencies

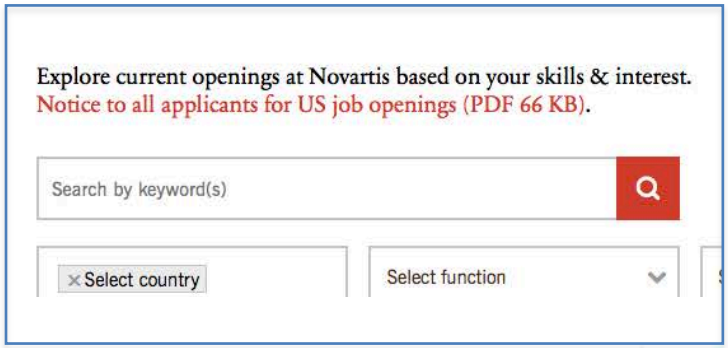
Research Competency Skill Assessment				Date			
		Completed Workshop or Training	Watched Another Perform	Performed with Supervision	Performed Independently	Taught the Skill	Published with Skill
1	**Discipline-Specific Conceptual Knowledge**						
	Defining scientific questions						
	Design testable hypothesis						
	Broad knowledge acquisition						
	Critical interpretation and analysis of data						
2	**Research Skill Development**						
	Literature Search Strategy and Interpretation						
	Experimental Design						
	Statistical Analysis						
	Identifying Sources of Error and Bias						
	Data Analysis and Interpretation						
	Laboratory Techniques and Safety						
	Principles of Peer Review Process						
3	**Communication Skills**						
	Writing (Abstract/Paper/Grant)						
	Oral (Journal Club/ Oral Talk)						
	Teaching Others						
	Public Outreach						
4	**Professionalism**						
	Workplace						
	Cultural Diversity						
	Skills as Mentor and Mentee						
	Team Work/ Collaboration						
5	**Leadership and Management Skills**						

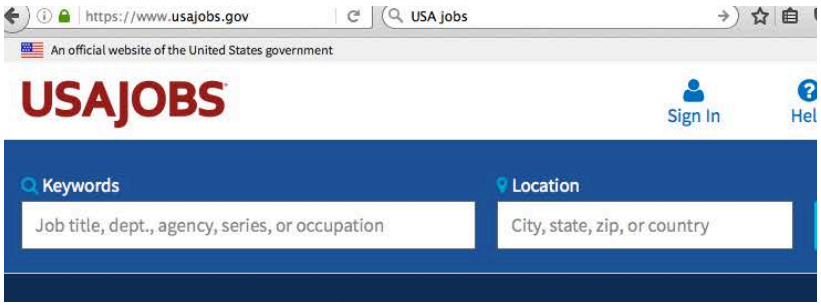
Organize F31 goals by these headers

2. Career Exploration

2. Career exploration

Learn about career options for PhD-level scientists, and compare your skills, interests, and values to each option.





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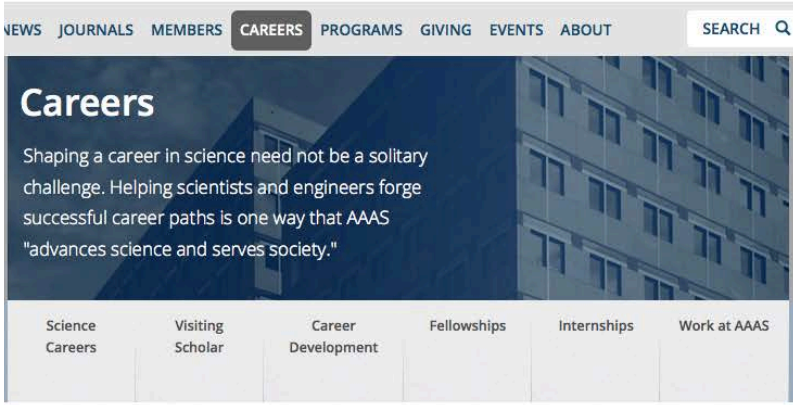
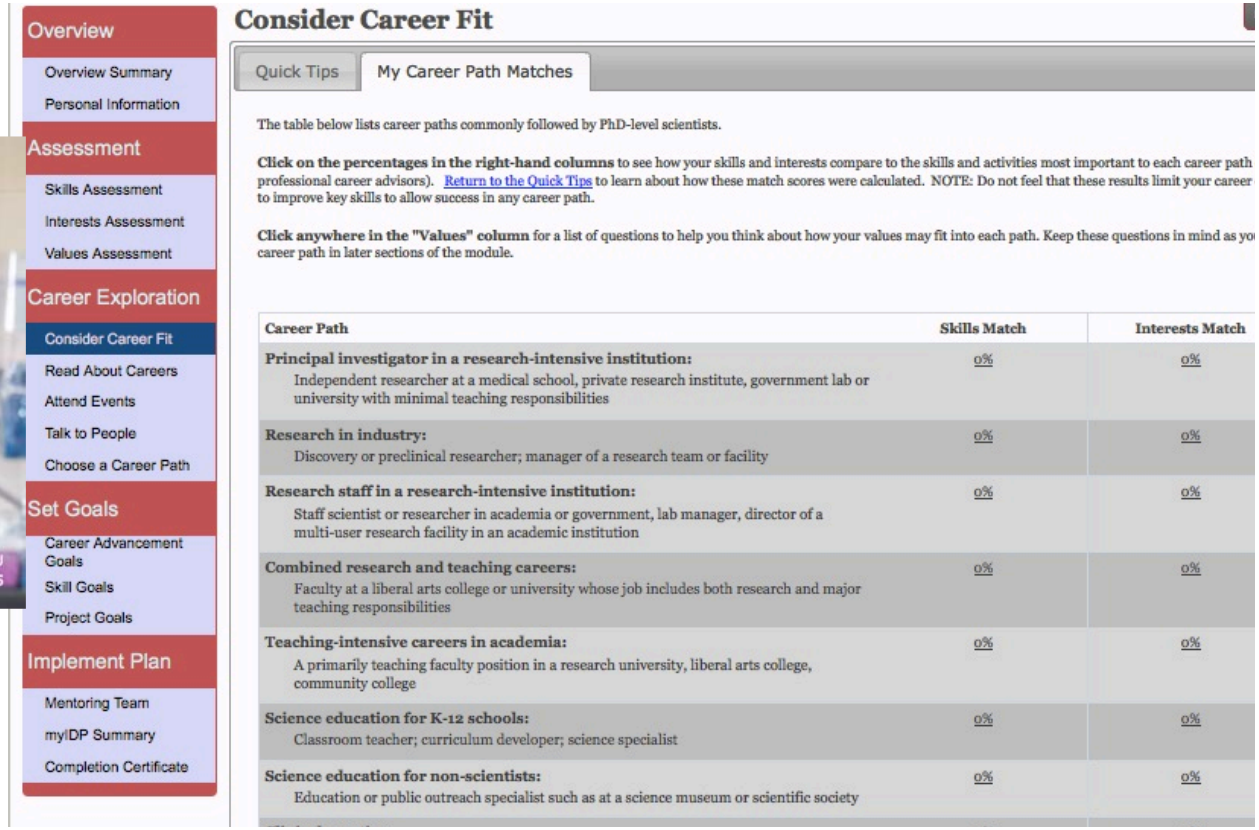


3. Set Goals

What activities/experience make you a good candidate?



What do you need to strengthen? How?

How will you use your IDP?

Discuss with career advisors/counselors/mentors/coaches
print out self assessment summaries, career path matches

Ask research advisors to get involved
includes research goal-setting

Clarify expectations
Improve communications

Form peer mentoring groups

Connect with alumni, professional society resources

Break big goals into small tasks

After completing the initial parts of the IDP,
You likely have some goals in mind, or gaps to be filled

You need a plan and a roadmap—Goals & Tasks

Break long-term goals

- into several short-term goals
- assign a deadline
- come up with related tasks

Ask yourself: Are they **SMART** goals?

SMART Goals

Specific	Do I know what has to happen?
Measurable	Will I know if I've completed the task?
Achievable	Is it realistic or do-able?
Result-oriented	Will it move me toward my goal?
Time-limited	Does it have a due date?

NIH expectations in training goals

F31

It is expected that the mentored research training experience will provide:

- A strong foundation in research design, methods, and analytic techniques appropriate to the proposed dissertation research;
- The enhancement of the applicant's ability to conceptualize and think through research problems with increasing independence;
- Experience conducting research using appropriate, state-of-the-art methods, as well as presenting and publishing the research findings as first author;
- The opportunity to interact with members of the scientific community at appropriate scientific meetings and workshops;
- Skills needed to transition to the next stage of the applicant's research career;
- The opportunity to enhance the applicant's understanding of the health-related sciences and relationship of the proposed research to health and disease.

Applicant's Background and Goals

3 sections:

Doctoral Dissertation and Research Experience
Training Goals and Objectives
Activities Planned Under this Award

- Interest in research, research career & how this application will assist in your goals
- IDP and goal setting
- Address any personal factors that affected advancement
- NRSAs are not designed to make better teachers
- Include a *training timeline*
- Sponsor also describes a training plan in detail; "training goals" and "activities" should be similar.

Tips for Training Plan

- individual development plan, plan to address gaps
- Candidacy date, any remaining coursework in PhD program
- Specific skills needed for your career
  - short course or workshop (CSHL, MBL)
  - advanced statistics, imaging, clinical populations
- New research skills, perhaps with a collaborator or core
- Skill-building in manuscript and grant-writing, speaking
- Presentations at national meetings, name target societies
- Goals for publications, name target journals
- Describe lab meetings, research in progress explicitly--meeting content and frequency
- Name thesis committee members and why

Letters of Recommendation

Selecting a Referee

•At least three, but no more than five, reference letters are required.

•The letters should be from individuals not directly involved in the application, but who are familiar with the applicant's qualifications, training, and interests.

•The sponsor/co-sponsor(s) of the application cannot be counted toward the three. Make sure you include a list of referees (including name, departmental affiliation, and institution) in the cover letter of the application so that the NIH staff will be aware of planned reference letter submissions.

Who will you ask? What do they need to know?

Approach referees early

Who might be your referee?

Previous research advisors (UG honors, IRTA or postbac, employ)

Course directors or qualifier committee members

Provide:

Up to date curriculum vitae

Your specific aims page

Draft letter/ bullets to emphasize

Letters of Recommendation

- Referees must submit reference letters through the eRA Commons by the application due date.
  Referees DO NOT need need to login to eRA Commons to submit their letters.
- Referees will need to provide the following information with their reference letter:
  - PI's (fellow/candidate's) eRA Commons user name
  - PI's first and last name as in eRA Commons account
  - FOA Number to which you are applying
- Upon submission of the reference letters, the eRA Commons will send confirmation e-mails to both the referee and the fellow/candidate.