

NIH NRSA F31 Fellowship Instructions (Nov 2025)

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Fellowship applications submitted on or after January 25, 2025, will use a revised application and review criteria. Previous headings and page limits have changed so applications should use **FORMS-I**. Please refer to the Fellowship instructions ([here](#)) and further instructions below.

The use of SciENcv is not yet required for F31 applications. Please see instructions ([here](#)) on how to use SciENcv to prepare your NIH Biosketch.

The NRSA fellowship application and review now focuses on three assessments: A) Candidate preparedness and potential; B) Research training plan; C) Commitment of the candidate. Each of these areas will be scored 1 - 9.

This document supplements, but does not replace, NIH guidance. Please be sure to read the program solicitation and guidelines thoroughly **and check for updates** before preparing your proposal. This document provides tips to orient and aid in application preparation.

Notice of Funding Opportunity and Fellowship Instructions

- The Fellowship instructions Forms version I, Mar 2025 ([here](#)).
- Revisions to the NIH Fellowship Application and Review Process ([here](#)).
- FAQs ([here](#)).
- The F31 Notice of Funding Opportunity PA-25-422 is ([here](#)).

NRSA Checklist of Applicant and Sponsor Components

Major sections for the F31 Forms-I and page limits are described below and ([here](#)):

Project Summary/ Abstract	30 lines of text
Project Narrative	3 sentences
Introduction. Resubmissions only	1 page(s)
Candidate's Goals, Preparedness and Potential	3 page(s)
Training Activities and Timelines	3 page(s)
Research Training Project Specific Aims	1 page(s)
Research Training Project Strategy	6 page(s)
Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research	1 page(s)
Sponsor(s) Commitment	6 page(s)
Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants	6 page(s)
Biographical Sketch	5 page(s)
Cover letter	1 page(s)
Budget (see components below)	Stipend, Tuition

Fellowship Budget Components

Tuition	GW graduate tuition '25-'26 CCAS : \$2091 per credit
Health Insurance	Graduate SHIP : \$2999 per year approx.
Stipend	NRSA stipend FY2025 : Indicate source of funds to bring up to GW stipend. (Predoc \$28,788, Postdoc \$62,232)

Before you begin, contact your GW Research Support Team

Please submit a GW Intent to Submit Form ([here](#)) to GW RST3 to alert them to your intended submission date. They will collaborate with you on the SF 424 cover page information and upload documents for routing. Be nice to them, they are helping you.

NIH proposals are submitted electronically by the GW MyResearch via the NIH ASSIST System.

The individual Fellowship applicant for whom support is being requested is designated as the PD/PI on the application and must be registered in eRA Commons as PI ([here](#)).

Proposals *MUST* be submitted on or before 5:00pm Local Time on the Deadline Date. If an NIH “standard deadline” date falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the deadline is typically extended to the following business day, ***but always check!***

Note: You must provide a complete (draft) application to GW Grants and Contracts 5-7 business days before the NIH deadline to allow approvals. You can revise your documents during the review period and submit final versions before the application is submitted to NIH by GW.

Application Format

- Each section is submitted as a separate PDF file. Limit file names to 50 characters or less and use only standard characters. Do not use special characters (e.g., “&”, “*”, “%”, “/”, “#”) in the file name.
- Margins are ½” all around (in Microsoft Word, choose “narrow”).
- Recommended fonts = Arial, Garamond, Georgia, Helvetica, Times New Roman, or Verdana.
- Text = Black, size 11 or larger, there may be no more than 15 characters per linear inch (including characters and spaces).
- Suggest you use left-only justify.
- Do not include headers or footers.
- Project Title – limited to 200 characters including spaces and punctuation.
- Use section headings indicated by NIH.
- Suggest you **place any figure and its legend inside the same text box**, so they can easily be moved in the document.

Application Details / Tips

1. **Project Summary/ Abstract:** Succinct and accurate description of proposed work; 30 lines of text.
2. **Project Narrative:** Relevance to public health. If funded, it will become public.
3. **Facilities & Other Resources:** Description of the organizational scientific and educational facilities to complete the proposed research training plan.
4. **Equipment.**
5. **PHS Fellowship Supplemental Form:** (begins p 55 of NIH Fellowship Instructions)
6. **Introduction:** Only for revised applications, especially important to address summary.

7. **Candidate Section (3 pages):** To describe goals, preparedness, and potential. Organize in the specified order and start each section with appropriate headings:

- A. **Overall Training Goals:** Goals for proposed research training and long-term goals for career in biomedical research workforce; motivation for career.
- B. **Candidate's Preparedness:** Educational, scientific, and professional experiences that prepare the candidate for the proposed research training plan.
 - Address how relevant activities and experiences contributed to the candidate's scientific development and preparation for the current research training plan. Examples may include coursework, research experiences, conference attendance, internships, and employment.
 - Address any additional activities or experiences that demonstrate an interest and commitment to a career in the biomedical research workforce. Examples may include: seeking out opportunities for research skill development, engaging in leadership, service, teaching, and/or outreach activities.
- C. **Candidate's Self Assessment:** Define your current characteristics (such as relevant skills, abilities, traits, or attitudes) and your areas to develop that are likely to contribute most significantly to success in the proposed research training plan and career path. For example, the candidate may describe technical (techniques or technical methods, quantitative/computational approaches), operational (practices that promote rigorous and reproducible science, research safety, animal, or human welfare), or professional (management, leadership, communication, teamwork) skills.
 - Describe use of MyIDP to identify strengths / weaknesses, other tools.
 - Indicate two to four current characteristics that are likely to contribute to achieving the research training.
 - Describe two to four specific areas of development during the fellowship to attain stated research training and career goals.
- D. **Scientific Perspective:** Provide information about your potential to think about and express ideas within a scientific field. In this section, candidates should address:
 - Why this field of science is important and the ways the chosen research training project will advance the field.
 - A broader, unresolved scientific question in the chosen scientific field, the importance of the problem, and the ways biomedical research might advance the scientific field.

8. **Training Activities and Timeline (3 pages):**

- Describe, by year, the planned activities (coursework, professional development, research training project, mentoring, clinical activities, etc.) during the proposed award. Note that the Research Training Project Strategy will be detailed in a separate section described below. Estimate the percentage of time that will be devoted to each activity. The percentage should total 100 for each year.
- Explain how the training activities will develop the areas defined in the self-assessment section and help to meet the fellowship goals.
- Provide specific examples of how the proposed research training will facilitate the transition to the next career stage.
- Describe why the Sponsor(s), collaborators, and research training environment are appropriate for the proposed research training plan. Candidates should expand upon, but not duplicate, information found in the Facilities and Other Resources section or in the Sponsor(s) section describing the Research Training Environment.
- The research training is expected to broaden the candidate's perspective, opportunities, and networks. Therefore, postdoctoral candidates requesting training at their doctorate organization or senior fellowship candidates requesting training at their current organization must explain why further training at that organization would be valuable.

- **Biosketch.** After Jan 25, 2025, candidates should only use FORMS-I Biosketch forms and support the revised application. Note that grades will not be requested or allowed.

9. **Research Training Plan:**

The research training project within the overall research training plan should be evaluated in its utility to provide training to the fellowship candidate in concert with their career goals, strengths, and weaknesses.

The Research Training Project section is expected to be tailored to the experience level of the candidate and to allow for the development of the necessary skills for further career advancement. The research training project should be achievable within the requested funding period.

The Research Training Project should include the following:

- Specific aims and objectives.
- Methods, approaches, and techniques for each aim and objective.
- Discussion of possible challenges and how they will be managed.
- Alternative approaches that could be tried if the initial approaches do not work.

Candidates should propose a rigorous research training project based on a strong scientific foundation. Fellowship applications do not require preliminary data or extensive experimental detail; however, candidates should provide sufficient scientific and technical details for reviewers to understand and assess the merits of the scientific foundation and research training project.

A. Research Training Project Specific Aims (1 page)

B. Research Training Project Strategy (6 pages)

- *The application should describe the collaborative process between the candidate and the sponsor(s) in the development, writing, review, and editing of the research training plan, including the research training project aims and strategy.*
- *Explain how the training activities will develop the areas defined in the self-assessment section and help to meet the fellowship goals.*
- *Provide specific examples of how the proposed research training will facilitate the transition to the next career stage.*
- *Describe why the Sponsor(s), collaborators, and research training environment are appropriate for the proposed research training plan. Candidates should expand upon, but not duplicate, information found in the Facilities and Other Resources section or in the Sponsor(s) section describing the Research Training Environment.*
- *The research training is expected to broaden the candidate's perspective, opportunities, and networks. Therefore, postdoctoral candidates requesting training at their doctorate organization or senior fellowship candidates requesting training at their current organization must explain why further training at that organization would be valuable.*
- *Although the fellowship research training project may fall within the larger funded research program of the sponsor(s), **the research training project strategy must be written in the candidate's own words.** Using language written by others is not allowed in this section because the application is intended to provide information regarding the candidate's understanding of the research training project and ability to communicate the scientific rationale and approaches.*

- *Additionally, this section will provide information to evaluate the training potential of the research training project. Candidates may solicit feedback and incorporate suggestions from the sponsor(s) and other scientists into the research training project strategy, but **the text must be written by the candidate.***

Organize the Research Training Project Strategy in the specified order and use the instructions provided below:

A. Scientific Foundation and Rationale:

- Provide the context for the proposed research training project. Include information on published and unpublished findings serving as the scientific foundation for the proposed research training project.
- Describe the strengths and weaknesses in the rigor of the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project.
- Describe the rationale for the research training project, including unaddressed areas for research and why this area of research is interesting and important.
- Describe how achieving the proposed research training project goals will advance biomedical research in the candidate's chosen field.

B. Approach:

- Describe the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses to be used to accomplish the specific aims of the project. Describe plans to address weaknesses in the rigor of the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project. Describe the experimental design and methods proposed and how they will achieve robust and unbiased results. Unless addressed separately in the Resource Sharing Plan attachment, include how the data will be collected, analyzed, and interpreted, as well as any resource sharing plans, as appropriate. Resources and tools for rigorous experimental design can be found at the Enhancing Reproducibility through Rigor and Transparency website ([here](#)).
- For trials that randomize groups or deliver interventions to groups, describe how your methods for analysis and sample size are appropriate for your plans for participant assignment and intervention delivery. These methods can include a group or cluster randomized trial or an individually randomized group-treatment trial. Additional information is available on the Research Methods Resources webpage ([here](#)). Discuss potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success anticipated to achieve the aims.
- If the project is in the initial stages of development, describe any strategy to establish feasibility, and address the management of any high risk aspects of the proposed work.
- Explain how relevant biological variables, such as sex, are factored into research designs and analyses for studies in vertebrate animals and humans. For example, strong justification from the scientific literature, preliminary data, or other relevant considerations must be provided for applications proposing to study only one sex. Refer to NIH Guide Notice on Sex as a Biological Variable in NIH-funded Research for additional information ([here](#)).
- Point out any procedures, situations, or materials that may be hazardous to personnel and the precautions to be exercised. If applicable, a full discussion on the use of select agents should appear in the Select Agent Research attachment below. If research on Human Embryonic Stem Cells (hESCs) is proposed, an approved cell line from the NIH hESC Registry cannot be chosen. Provide a strong justification for why an appropriate cell line cannot be chosen from the registry at this time.

10. Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research

- A.** Format: Describe the required format of instruction (i.e., face-to-face lectures, coursework, and/or real-time discussion groups). A plan with only on-line instruction is not acceptable.
- B.** Subject Matter: Describe the breadth of subject matter (e.g., conflict of interest, authorship, data management, human subjects and animal use, laboratory safety, research misconduct, and research ethics).
- C.** Faculty Participation: Describe the role of the sponsor/mentor(s) and other faculty involvement in the instruction.
- D.** Duration of Instruction: Describe the total number of contact hours of instruction, taking into consideration the duration of the program.
- E.** Frequency of Instruction: Instruction must occur during each career stage and at least once every four years. Document any prior instruction during the candidate's current career stage, including the inclusive dates instruction was previously completed.
- F.** Senior fellows may fulfill the requirement for instruction in RCR by participating as lecturers and discussion leaders.

11. Sponsor(s) Commitment: Commitment to Candidate, Mentoring, and Training Environment (instructions begin p 65). Each sponsor and co-sponsor statement must address the following sections (A-E):

- A.** Mentoring Approach and Candidate Mentoring Plan. Describe their mentoring approach and the specific mentoring plan for the candidate to ensure career advancement in the biomedical research workforce. The mentoring plan should be tailored to the overall training goals outlined by the candidate. May include enhancing candidate's professional development, maintaining effective communication, aligning expectations, fostering independence, promoting equitable and inclusive environments.
- B.** Prior Commitment to Training and Mentoring. Demonstrate the sponsor(s) past commitment to effective training, mentoring, and career development. Provide examples from 2-5 recent trainees at the level of the candidate, and describe individualized training and mentoring offered, describe impact of training on trainee outcome.
- C.** Commitment to the Candidate's Research Training Plan. Sponsor(s) should provide:
 - A description of the frequency, duration, and nature of meetings with the candidate throughout the training plan timeline.
 - A listing of how many other scientists in the research team will be supervised during the proposed fellowship award period and how the candidate will receive consistent, individualized attention.
- D.** Research Training Environment. The sponsor should describe the research training environment and how it will meet the needs of the candidate to achieve the outlined goals.
 - The sponsor(s) research training environment and how the environment will support the candidate's development and attainment of the defined career goals. Sponsor(s) are encouraged to describe efforts to create safe, inclusive, supportive, and accessible research environments. Describe the day-to-day research environment with special attention to training and how the candidate will benefit from the environment.
 - Organizational research training environments such as available centralized research facilities or equipment needed to complete the research training project not listed elsewhere in the application.
 - Relevant and accessible organizational research training program(s) related to the candidate's area of interest.
 - Opportunities for professional development and intellectual interactions, for example, scientific meetings, journal clubs, seminars, and opportunities for presentations. Include items such as classes, opportunities for interaction with other scientists and any professional

skills development opportunities. Describe how the sponsor will work with the candidate to develop and publish rigorous scientific products such as publications and presentations.

E. Candidate's Potential. Provide information about the candidate's main areas for development as well as potential to benefit from the training plan to have a productive career in the biomedical research workforce.

- Describe characteristics skills, abilities, traits, attitudes that contribute to further advancement.
- Areas for development (technical, operational, professional).
- Overall assessment of candidate's preparedness and likelihood for success in the proposed training plan.

12. Letters of Support from Collaborators, Contributors, and Consultants:

If any collaborators, consultants, or advisors are expected to contribute to the scientific development or execution of the candidate's research training plan, attach letters of support from those individuals in this section, describing their anticipated role and contributions.

13. Reference Letters: New F and K reference letter instructions to provide to referees ([here](#)).