NIH Mentored Career Development Awards – 2

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Write to the review criteria!


Candidate


Career development plan


Research strategy


Mentor(s)


Environment & Institutional Commitment

A strong response for each criterion!

Application for a K award should be a collaboration between you & your mentors

You (the "applicant") are **Principal Investigator**

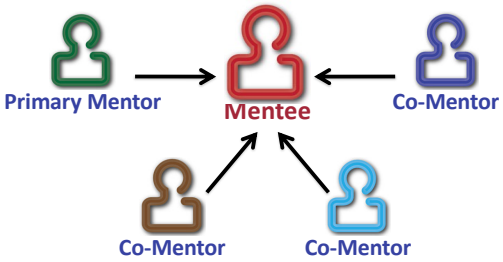
- you are responsible for submitting the application
- you write the research training plan in collaboration with your sponsor

Your advisors/mentors are the **Mentors**

- they must write sections of the application

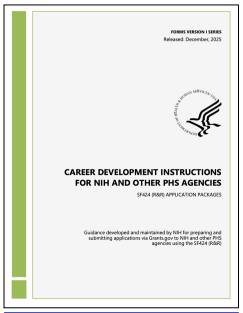
You must involve your advisors/mentors early & often in crafting the application!

Candidates are encouraged to identify more than one mentor, i.e., a mentoring team



Use your mentoring team to complement the expertise of you and your primary mentor

Follow the instructions for Career Development Awards and the relevant Program Announcement

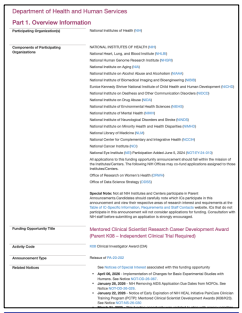

FORMS VERSION I SERIES
Released: December, 2025

CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTRUCTIONS FOR NIH AND OTHER PHS AGENCIES

SF424 (R&R) APPLICATION PACKAGES

Guidance developed and maintained by NIH for preparing and submitting applications via Grants.gov to NIH and other PHS agencies using the SF424 (R&R)

Career Development Awards:
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf


Department of Health and Human Services
Part 1. Overview Information

Mentored Clinical Scientist Research Career Development Award (Parent K08 – Independent Clinical Trial Required)

PA-24-182:
https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

You must name a Primary Mentor

- the primary mentor, together with the candidate, is responsible for the planning, directing, monitoring, and executing the proposed program
- the primary mentor should have **sufficient independent research support** to cover the costs of the proposed research project in excess of the allowable costs of this award

Career Development Awards: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf

PA-24-182: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

Mentors and co-mentors are Senior/Key Personnel on your application

Each mentor & co-mentor must . . .

- have an eRA Commons username
- provide a NIH Biosketch
  - the Personal Statement should include their role as mentor on your application
- provide "Current & Pending (Other) Support" pages*
- provide a **Mentor Statement**

*Instructions: https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/forms-directory/cpos-common-form

Career Development Awards: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf

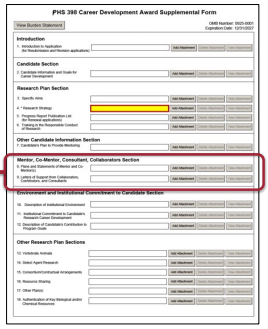
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Plans and Statements of Mentor and Co-Mentor(s) — *six pages your mentor(s) must write*

- total = 6 pages
- division of 6 pages depends on number of mentors
- your primary mentor should write at least 3 pages
- recommend each co-mentor provides 1 page
- on letter head and signed by mentor

Mentor statements are attached to the Career Development Supplemental Form

Combine as a single pdf & attach to Mentor, Co-Mentor, Consultant, Collaborators Section



Career Development Awards: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf

The Statement by the Primary Mentor must include

- information on his/her research qualifications and previous experience as a research supervisor
- a plan that describes the nature of the supervision and mentoring that will occur during the proposed award period
- a plan for career progression for the candidate to move from the mentored stage of his/her career to independent research investigator status during the project period of the award
- a plan for monitoring the candidate's research, publications, and progression towards independence, Including annual evaluation

PA-24-182: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

Similar statements are required from each Co-mentor

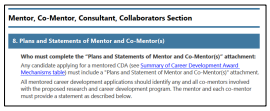
- If more than one Co-mentor is proposed, the respective areas of expertise and responsibility of each should be described
- Co-mentors should clearly describe how they will coordinate the mentoring of the candidate
- Co-mentors not at the applicant's institution must describe mechanisms & frequency of communication with the applicant

Career Development Awards: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf

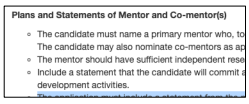
PA-24-182: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

The mentor statements must match your career development training plan

- review NIH Instructions with your mentors



- review instructions in the Program Announcement



- provide mentors with your Career Development Training Plan and Specific Aims

Career Development Awards: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/forms-i/career-forms-i.pdf

PA-24-182: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

NIH asks reviewers to consider these questions for the *Mentors . . .*

- Are the **qualifications** of the mentor(s) in the area of the proposed research appropriate?
- Does the mentor(s) adequately address the candidate's **potential** and his/her strengths and **areas needing improvement**?
- Is there adequate description of the quality and extent of the **mentor's proposed role** in providing guidance and advice to the candidate?
- Is the **mentor's description** of the elements of the research career development activities, including formal course work adequate?
- Are there adequate plans for **monitoring and evaluating** the career development awardee's progress toward independence?

PA-24-182: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-24-182.html

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NIH asks reviewers to consider these questions for the *Mentors . . .*

- Is there evidence of the mentor's, **previous experience** in fostering the development of independent investigators?
- Is there evidence of the mentor's **current research productivity** and peer-reviewed support?
- Is **active/pending support** for the proposed research project appropriate and adequate?

Review your mentor's statement with these criteria in mind!

Your Mentors must have a strong record of research and mentoring

Your mentor should meet these qualifications (& document them adequately!)

If not, provide a plan to correct any deficiencies:

- co-mentor(s)
- Advisory Committee

You may include other individuals who will contribute to your project

Collaborators — resources and/or expertise

Consultants — fee-for-service

Advisory Committee — additional advice & guidance

- must provide letters of support agreeing to participate and describing role* (biosketch not required)
- **6 page limit** for all letters of support from collaborators, contributors & consultants
- cannot provide letters of reference

**Letters of Support will change to Letters of Collaboration when Forms J are introduced in 2027*

see NOT-OD-26-094

You will also need Letters of Reference to support your proposal

Required for K01, K08, K22, K23 & K99/R00 applications

- 3–5 letters from individuals other than those involved in the application
  — i.e., not sponsor/mentor or collaborators

Letters should address candidate's competence & potential as an independent investigator

The referees (name, department, institution) must be listed in the Cover Letter Attachment

https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/advice-on-application-sections/reference-letters

Plan now for Reference Letters

- Review and confirm your list (mentors are excluded)
- Check that they are available, willing and excited to support you for your K application
- Make their job easy – provide them with updates on your research, your goals, Specific Aims
- Show respect and appreciation

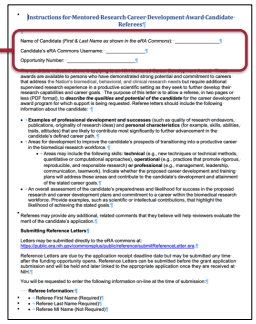
Reference Letters are due to the NIH eRA Commons by the K submission deadline!

NIH has instructions that you can send to your referees

Include:

- your name
- ERA Commons username
- Funding Opportunity Number

(these must be included in the reference letter)



Instructions for Mentored Research Career Development Award Candidate-Referee

Name of Candidate (First & Last Name as shown in the eRA Commons): _____

Candidate's eRA Commons Username: _____

Opportunity Number: _____

awards are available to persons who have demonstrated strong potential and commitment to careers that address the Nation's biomedical, behavioral, and clinical research needs but require additional supervised research experience in a productive scientific setting as they seek to further develop their research capabilities and career goals. The purpose of this letter is to allow a referee, in two pages or less (PDF format), to **describe the qualities and potential of the candidate** for the career development award for which the candidate is being requested. Referee letters should include the following information about the candidate:

- **Examples of professional development and successes** (such as quality of research endeavors, publications, originality of research ideas) and **personal characteristics** (for example, skills, abilities, traits, attitudes) that are likely to contribute most significantly to further advancement in the candidate's defined career path.
- Areas for development to improve the candidate's prospects of transitioning into a productive career in the candidate's chosen research area.
  - Areas may include the following skills: **technical** (e.g., new techniques or technical methods, quantitative or computational approaches), **operational** (e.g., practices that promote rigorous, reproducible, and responsible research) or **professional** (e.g., management, leadership, communication, teamwork). Indicate whether the proposed career development and training plans will address these areas and contribute to the candidate's development and attainment of the stated career goals.
- An overall assessment of the candidate's preparedness and likelihood for success in the proposed research and career development plans and commitment to a career within the biomedical research workforce. Provide examples, such as scientific or intellectual contributions, that highlight the likelihood of achieving the stated goals.

Referees may provide any additional, related comments that they believe will help reviewers evaluate the merit of the candidate's application.

Submitting Reference Letters

Letters may be submitted directly to the eRA commons at: https://public.era.nih.gov/commonsrvas/public/referenceLetterEntry.era

Reference Letters are due by the application receipt deadline date but may be submitted any time after the funding opportunity opens. Reference Letters can be submitted before the grant application submission and will be held and later linked to the appropriate application once they are received at NIH.

You will be requested to enter the following information on-line at the time of submission:

Referee Information:

- Referee First Name (Required)
- Referee Last Name Required)
- Referee MI Name (Not Required)

https://grants.nih.gov/grants-process/write-application/advice-on-application-sections/reference-letters