General Tips for Writing a Career Development Award

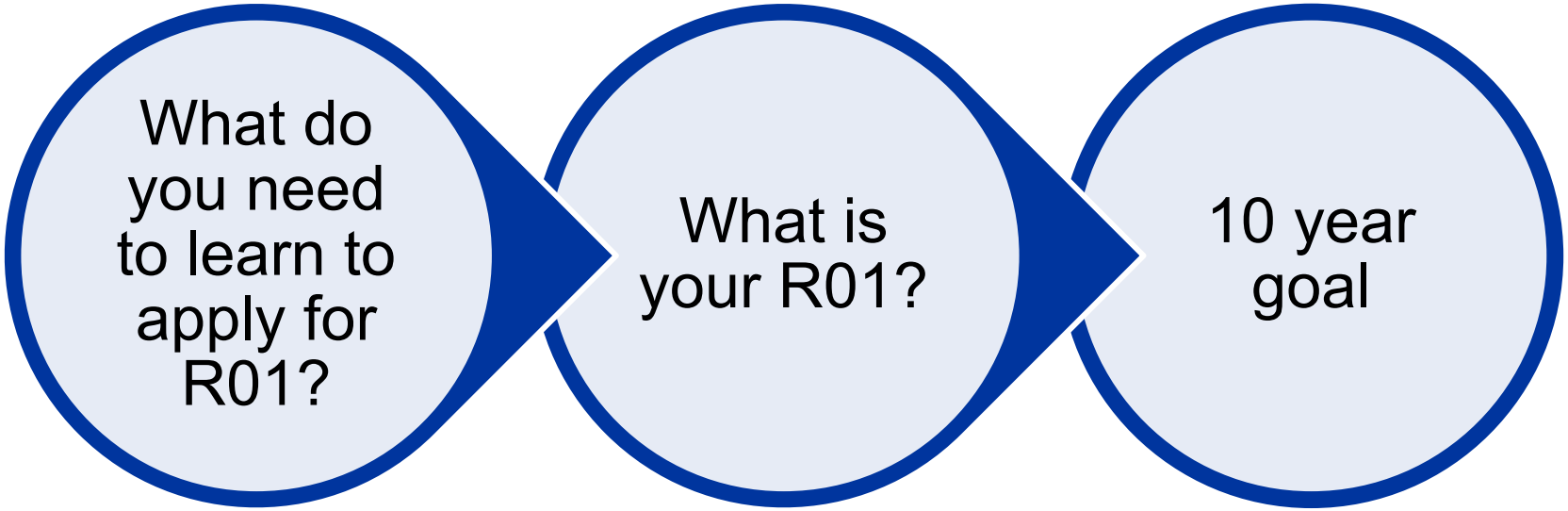
- To help promising new investigators achieve research independence (i.e., to compete successfully for R01 funding).
- Organizing principle: Preparing for the R01 grant application you will submit at the end of the K award
- Think about your short-term goals (5 year) and long-term (10 year) goals

Mentored K Awards: Review

- **Overall Impact Score**
- **Scored Review Criteria**
  - **Candidate**
  - **Career Development Plan**
  - **Research Plan**
  - **Mentor(s), Consultant(s), and Collaborator(s)**
  - **Environment and Institutional Commitment to the Candidate**

Preparing your approach

Know where you are going.



Career development, feasibility

The Candidate: Review Criteria

- **Quality of the candidate's academic and clinical record**
- **Potential to develop as an outstanding independent researcher**
- **Commitment to a career in scientific research**
- **Likelihood that the career development plan will contribute substantially to the scientific development of the candidate.**

Candidate's Background

- Suggested length: About 1 page.
- Personal narrative of your professional career. Convey anything that may not arise from your biosketch – who you are, motivation.
- Make sure to convey your passion about a specific focus or goal
- OK to use 1st person ("I")
- Make this a compelling narrative, not a strict chronological statement
- Doing this well may be the most difficult task in writing a K proposal

Candidate's Background

- Give examples of the opportunities you've had to engage in research (basic or clinical) as evidence of your long-standing commitment to research.
- Highlight early evidence of productivity (e.g., pursuing a specific question, analyzing data, presenting or publishing your results). Include honors, awards, grants. This is really important.
- This must be compelling

Career development plan: Review criteria

- Appropriateness of the content, the phasing, and the proposed duration of the career development plan for achieving scientific independence
- Consistency of the career development plan with the candidate's career goals
- Likelihood that the plan will contribute substantially to the achievement of scientific independence
- Timeline – When are you planning to submit manuscripts? How about the next phase of funding?

Career Development Plan

- Start by stating your long-term career goals and objectives
- Be very specific to name the specific set of skills you need to achieve your short-term and long-term goals.
- Explain why gaining additional training and mentored research experience in these areas will be critical to achieving your short-term and long-term career development goals
- Describe in detail how you will gain this training, such as through specific courses, individualized tutorials, or practical experience gained in someone's research lab

Career development plans

Tips

- **Create a table of the skills you will focus upon.**
  - **Fill in with mentors, courses, strategies to help you gain these skills**
  - **Some reviewers as you to be specific – course name, credit, when**
  - **Create a time table. Training usually front-loaded**

- **How will you be evaluated?**

Research Plan

- Just as for any research grant, need strong specific aims
- Methods must be very detailed but you have about 6 pages. May have to sacrifice from background a little.
- You don’t need to have experience with every method or technique but if you do not, be supported by mentors
- Reviewers will make allowances for being overly ambitious but there are limits
- If you propose very complex and obviously expensive research, you should have a plan for funding it
- Be careful if you are proposing a clinical trial to be adequately powered. Think through this very carefully.
- It is perfectly fine to propose pilot and feasibility

Mentors, Co-Mentors, and Collaborators: Review

- Evaluation criteria for primary mentor:
  - Independent funded researcher
  - Appropriateness of mentor's research qualifications in the area of this application.
  - Quality and extent of mentor's role in providing guidance and advice to candidate.
  - Previous experience in fostering the development of more junior researchers, must be documented in letter from mentor.
  - History of productivity and support.
  - (Adequacy of support for the research project.)

Mentors, Co-Mentors, and Collaborators

- Choose a primary mentor who is a senior investigator with a track-record of funding; your primary mentor should be at OHSU. Include co-mentors who will complement the primary mentor's strengths.
- Each member of your mentor team must play a defined role in your training or research plan. Introduce each with a short paragraph. Mentors outside of OHSU are fine!
- If you need many members, maybe call some scientific or technical advisors/collaborators who have a relatively narrow area of responsibility and focus.
- How often will you meet with each mentor?
- Include an evaluation component that describes how your mentors will assess your progress (e.g., quarterly meetings); include specific milestones during the K award. Include timeline, frequency of mentoring

Primary Mentor's Statement

- The letter from the primary mentor is very important. It should cover the following areas:
  - His or her qualifications in the research area proposed by the candidate.
  - Previous experience as a research supervisor. Cite examples of mentees and their current outcome.
  - The nature and extent of supervision that will occur during the award period.
  - What resources, if any, they will make available to you in support of your training and/or research.
  - This MUST agree with what you say in the body of the grant

Hint: The letter from your mentor is about them, not you. They must write it.

Primary mentor's statement (2)

- The primary mentor's letter can also "re-frame" any potential weaknesses in the application.
  - Examples:
    - Productivity of candidate (e.g., publications, grants).
    - Feasibility of conducting research plan with resources of K award.
    - Limited mentoring experience of primary mentor.
    - Limited resources of primary mentor (e.g., no current R01 funding.
    - Co-mentor(s) not at OHSU.
    - Scientific overlap with scholar and primary mentor.

Institutional Commitment to Candidate's Research Career Development

- Applicant institution's commitment to the scientific development of the candidate and assurances that the institution intends the candidate to be "an integral part of its research program."
- Applicant institution's commitment to protect at least 75% of the candidate's effort for proposed career development activities.
- Describe the research facilities and educational opportunities of the sponsoring institution (OHSU) that are related to the candidate's career development training and research plans. Hint: OCTRI
- Do NOT include a comment that "If funded, then the applicant will be appointed to faculty…." No contingencies.

Institutional Commitment to Candidate's Research Career Development (Cont'd)

- These assurances are stated in a letter from your department chair or division chief. Protected time is the #1 issue.

- Note: For fellows, this letter must state that you will be promoted from your current position to a "higher" position (full-time faculty position, assistant professor) during the review period or at the very least, K award period.

Other documents

- Responsible conduct of research. Ask for our boilerplate.
  - This is important but is more like a checkbox for the reviewer
- May need rigor and reproducibility section
- Inclusion of women, minorities and children in research and Protection of human subjects
  - If there is any question about IRB approval, get some provisional understanding or go through IRB ahead of time
- Data sharing plan

Plan ahead!

How can OCTRI help?

- **Design Studio**
- **Clinical Research Development Team**
- **Grant library**
- **OCTRI letter of support**