

NSF Mentoring Plan

Last updated: April 16, 2024

Note: The mentoring plan below is an example. Each plan should be tailored to the proposed project, the department's goals, and the needs of the postdoctoral researcher(s) and/or graduate student(s). Proposers are advised that the mentoring plan must not be used to circumvent the 15-page limit of the Project Description.

Each proposal that requests funding to support postdoctoral scholars or graduate students must include a "Mentoring Plan" in the supplementary documentation section of Research.gov describing the mentoring activities that will be provided. **Not to exceed 1 page**, the mentoring plan must describe the mentoring that will be provided to **all postdoctoral scholars or graduate students supported by the project**, regardless of whether they reside at the submitting organization, any subrecipient organization, or at any organization participating in a simultaneously submitted collaborative proposal. Please note that separate plans are not required for postdoctoral scholars or graduate students. The plan may, however, specify how different components of the mentoring program will be enacted for the two types of researchers. Mentoring activities provided to postdoctoral scholars or graduate students supported on the project will be evaluated under the Broader Impacts review criterion. For more information, see [PAPPG Chapter. II D.2.i\(1\)](#).

The goal of the mentoring plan is to provide the skills, knowledge, and experiences necessary to prepare postdoctoral researchers and graduate students to excel in their chosen career path. Examples of mentoring activities include but are not limited to: career counseling; training in preparation of proposals, publications and presentations; guidance on ways to improve teaching and mentoring skills; guidance on how to effectively collaborate with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas; and training in responsible professional practices

EXAMPLE Mentoring Plan:

- **Orientation** will include in-depth conversations between <PI name> and the postdoc(s) and graduate student(s). To assist in the expectation setting process, postdocs and PIs are encouraged to complete an Initial Meeting Template/Worksheet for Postdoc/Graduate Student and Mentor as well as annual review meetings. Harvard's FAS Office of Postdoctoral Affairs offers a New Postdoc Orientation program every other month.
- **Career Counseling/Advising** will be provided in part by <PI name>. Postdocs at Harvard also have access to individual career counseling appointments with the Director of the FAS Office of Postdoctoral Affairs. This office also offers workshops on career and professional development. Graduate Students have access to career counseling information, coaching events, and networking through designated University Offices.
- **Training in Preparation of Grant Proposals** will be gained by direct involvement in proposal prepared by <PI name> to learn best practices, including identification of key research questions, definition of objectives, description of approach and rationale, and construction of a work plan, timeline, and budget. Postdocs and graduate students will also have access to approved sample grants, as well as grant writing tips.
- **Publications and Presentations** are expected to result from the work supported by the grant. These will be prepared under the direction of <PI name> and in collaboration with researchers at Harvard as appropriate. Postdocs and graduate students will receive guidance and training in the preparation of manuscripts for scientific journals and presentations at conferences. [Additionally, postdoc researchers will have access to courses on Effective Presentation Skills via the Harvard University BRIDGE](#)

Program. To assist in travel to present research at conferences, Postdocs are eligible to apply for Postdoctoral Awards for Professional Development, sponsored by the FAS Office of Postdoctoral Affairs.

- **Teaching and Mentoring Skills** will be developed in the context of regular meetings within their research groups during which students and postdocs describe their work to colleagues and assist each other with solutions to challenging research problems, often resulting in cross- fertilization of ideas.
- **Instruction in Responsible Professional Practices** will be provided on a regular basis in the context of the research work and will include fundamentals of the scientific method, laboratory safety, and other standards of professional practice. In addition, postdocs will be encouraged to affiliate with one or more professional societies in their chosen field. Postdoctoral researchers and graduate students will also have access to “Responsible Conduct of Research,” a training course that meets for 2 hours of class time per week for 7 or 8 weeks, plus case studies and readings.
- **Effective Collaboration Skills**, with a focus on collaborations with researchers from diverse backgrounds and disciplinary areas.
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