K Awards-The Do’s and Don’ts

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Criteria for Evaluation

- Candidate
- Career and Development Plans/Goals
- Research Plan
- Mentor
- Environment and Institutional Commitment
- Other (human subjects, animal welfare, biohazards)
Evaluation of K Awards

• Each section is evaluated from 1-9
• There is usually 3 reviewers who usually are knowledgeable in the field
• The overall impact score is not the average of the three—the least attractive component will likely weigh down the overall score
Candidate

• Do you have a track record of high quality publications (first author)?
• Do you have a track record of high quality publications in the field of interest for this proposal?
• Does the applicant have the potential to develop an independent and productive research career?
• Do your letters (at least 3) attest to your commitment to and capability to become an independent investigator?
Candidate

• Do you have a clear commitment to academic medicine?
• Are you prepared at this point in time for funding?
Mentor

• The mentor should be senior and have a strong record of grant support and publication as a senior author.

• The mentor should address the candidates potential for success.

• There should be a description of the quality and extent of the mentor’s proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate?
Mentor

• The mentor should provide a career development plan for the candidate.
• A track record of mentoring leading to independence is a big positive—List prior trainees and their position and grant support.
• Is there support for the proposed research project?
• Mentor should detail your path to independence.
• Get letters of support from Division Director and Chair.
Mentor

• Describe the mentoring committee and the role they will play in your development and success of the proposal.

• Discuss how often the mentor will meet with the mentee and members of the mentoring committee.
Environment and Institutional Commitment

• Will you have 75% of your time protected-detail how the <25% time will be spent (teaching, clinical, administrative etc)

• Is the environment strong enough and in the right areas to support your work?

• Are there the appropriate core facilities?
Environment and Institutional Commitment

• Does the institution have plans for you beyond this proposal?

• Are there appropriate collaborators and co-mentors available? Are they of high quality?

• Is the commitment by the institution strong
  – Your rank
  – Will you be supported if you do not get the grant?
  – Is there a start up package?
  – Your protected time ≥75%
Career Development Plan and Goals

- What is the likelihood that your research plan will contribute substantially to your scientific development leading to independence?
- Is your prior training appropriate for this award at this time?
- Is the content, scope, phasing and duration of the career development plan appropriate when considered in the context of prior training and experience?
- Are the didactic talks and courses appropriate clearly stated and appropriate for your development?
Career Development Plan

• What are your deficiencies and how are you going to use this award to get to the next level.
• Are there adequate plans for monitoring and evaluating the candidates research and career development process?
• How often will you meet with your mentor and members of mentoring committee?
• Convince the reviewer that this will lead you to independence. How will you separate from your mentor?
Career Development Plan

• Don’t use the proposal to get a master’s degree-the government should not pay for your master’s degree. (my opinion)
• Show a time frame for your courses and grant submissions.
• Detail courses in career development and grant writing skills.
Research Plan

• AIMS-If the reviewer is not interested in the aims-you are finished before your start. The reviewer should want to read the proposal.

• BACKGROUND-The Floyd Rector Rule—Assume that your reviewers are smart but that they know nothing of your area of investigation

• PRELIMINARY DATA-Have adequate preliminary data to show that there is a potential for success.
Research Plan

• Are the proposed research question, design and methodology of significant scientific interest and technical merit?

• Is the research plan consistent with the candidates research career objectives.

• Is the research plan a vehicle for developing the research skills in the career development plan?

• The research plan should not be a methods book as you don’t have space
Research Plan

• Should have enough explanation and data to show that you can do the experiment
• Don’t break a tie or repeat what others have done previously
• Be sure that the experiments outlined are feasible
• Innovation counts
Do’s

• Write your grant months early so that you can think about what you have written.
• Show your grant to your mentor and others in your field.
• Show your grant to people outside of your area of interest-if they don’t understand the proposal, neither will the reviewer.
• Listen to criticism-don’t be arrogant.
More Do’s

• Convince the reviewer that this will lead you to independence.
• If you don’t get funded resubmit!
• If you decide to resubmit---listen to the reviewers. They took the time to read and critique your grant.