

How to Apply for a Postdoctoral Research Fellowship in Biology in Research.gov

Contacts for Competitive Areas 1 & 2:
Phone: 703 292-4694
Email: bio-dbi-prfb@nsf.gov

Contact for Competitive Area 3:
Phone: 703 292-4400
Email: dbipgr@nsf.gov

I. Important Proposal Preparation Information.

Be sure you are eligible. An individual is eligible to submit an application for a postdoctoral fellowship if all of the requirements below are met. If you fail to meet any eligibility criterion, your application will be returned without review.

You must:

- be a U.S. citizen (or national) or permanent resident of the United States (i.e., have a "green card") at the proposal deadline;
- present a research and training plan that falls within the purview of NSF's Directorate for Biological Sciences (BIO) and a focus in one of the selected areas, as described in this solicitation;
- have earned or plan to earn the doctoral degree in an appropriate field prior to the beginning of the fellowship;
- select sponsoring scientists, departments, and institutions that offer a significant opportunity to broaden your prior research focus and training;
- not have served in any position that requires the doctoral degree for more than 15 full time months prior to submission of the application (deadline); and
- not have submitted the same research to another NSF postdoctoral fellowship program.

General Document Preparation Guidelines: Prepare all documents according to guidelines in the program solicitation and the NSF Proposal and Awards Policies and Procedures Guide (PAPPG), Proposal Preparation Instructions. A brief summary of the requirements is given below. These requirements apply to all uploaded sections of an application, including supplementary documents.

The application must be clear, readily legible, and conform to the following requirements:

1. Use one of the following typefaces identified below:
 - Arial (not Arial Narrow), Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;
 - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
 - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger
 - A font size of less than 10 points may be used for mathematical formulas or equations, figure, table or diagram captions and when using a Symbol font to insert Greek letters or special characters. Applicants are cautioned, however, that the text must still be easily readable.
2. No more than 6 lines of text within a vertical space of one inch.
3. Margins, in all directions, must be at least an inch.
4. Proposal Pagination Instructions: Proposers are advised that Research.gov **automatically paginates proposals.**

For assistance with submitting to Research.gov, the NSF Help Desk is available from 7 AM to 9 PM ET except Federal holidays and weekends. Call 1-800-381-1532 or e-mail rgov@nsf.gov.

Submission Tips:

1. Print, read, and carefully note all the requirements and directions in the Program Solicitation.
2. Register as a Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow at [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) (Instructions below in II.)
3. Begin EARLY.
4. READ your application **(as a printout if needed)** before submitting.
5. Check the grammar and spelling on all documents.
6. Don't wait until the last minute; submit before the deadline.

II. How to Register as an “Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow”

PRFB applications are submitted by individual researchers, not by their affiliated institutions. It is for individual researchers only. ***You must register as a Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow.***

Go to [Research.gov](https://www.research.gov) and complete the Account Registration. You cannot submit an application without registering. Please use an email address that will not change when you switch institutions, so you can use it over the long term. (Most applicants use gmail)

After registering, you should get a summary page reviewing your responses. Verify the information and edit as necessary. Be sure to write down your NSF ID number as may need it in future steps.

Sign in to your account and select "My Profile", then select "Add a New Role".

Under Prepare Proposals and Manage Awards, select 'Add Investigator or Authorized User Role'. Then, select 'Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow' and Submit. It may take the system up to 30 minutes to reflect this new role in your status.

III. Additional Instructions to Prepare Application as a Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow

A. Begin your application.

Select ‘Prepare and Submit Proposals’, then select 'Prepare New' and 'Full Proposal'.

A screen will open asking you to associate your new proposal with an organization. Using the drop-down menu, select 'I am a Proposed Postdoctoral Fellow (Postdoctoral fellowship proposal)', then click 'Select and Continue'.

Select Funding Opportunity Number NSF 23-620, then click "Next"

Select Where to Apply, by choosing the appropriate BIO division and program.

For Competitive Areas 1 or 2 select 'Div of Biological Infrastructure (DBI)' then select a program:

- Competitive Area 1 (Broadening Participation of Groups Underrepresented in Biology)
 - Select "Broadening Participation of Groups Underrepresented in Biology"
- Competitive Area 2 (Integrative Research Investigating the Rules of Life Governing Interactions Between Genomes, Environment and Phenotypes)
 - Select “Biology Postdoctoral Research”

For Competitive Area 3, select 'Division of Integrative Organismal System (IOS)' and then select "NPGI PostDoc Rsrch Fellowship" for the Plant Genome Postdoctoral Research Fellowship.

Save your selection, then click 'Next'

NOTE: Although the system will allow you to make more than one selection, do not select more than one Competitive Area. Your proposal will ONLY be considered in your top choice.

On the next screen, Select Proposal Type, 'Postdoctoral Fellowship' will be automatically selected for you. Click 'Next'

Under Proposal Details, your Proposal Title will be autopopulated with 'Postdoctoral Fellowship: PRFB:'. Enter the rest of your proposal title here. The title of the project must be brief, scientifically or technically valid, and suitable for use in the public press.

Select 'Prepare Proposal to continue. Your proposal will now be assigned a temporary number and you can upload the required documents.

B. Form Preparation.

1. Prepare Cover Sheet. COMPLETE THIS FORM FIRST. Select 'Cover Sheet'.

a) Enter your requested start date (for this cycle, the following June 1 through March 1)

b) Enter the information for your host institution. If you have more than one host institution, list the primary one here and list both in your project description and summary (see below).

c) List any additional Federal Agencies to which you plan to or have submitted the same proposal.

d) Select the appropriate options under Other Information.

e) Click 'Save' when you are done with this page.

2. Follow the solicitation guidance for the remaining documents. Most are self-explanatory and detailed information regarding the contents is in the solicitation or accompanying documents. However, there are a few requirements from the PAPPG, departures from the PAPPG, and other details that are worth noting.

a) Under "Required"

- i) Facilities, Equipment, and Other Resource: This document is NOT required for the PRFB. Instead, upload a file containing only the text, "Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources document not applicable".
- ii) Budget Justification: This document is NOT required for the PRFB. Instead, upload a file containing only the text, "Budget Justification document not applicable".
- iii) Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan: This document is NOT required. Please do not upload a file to this section.
- iv) Data Management Plan: This document is required. Please follow guidance from the NSF Directorate of Biological Sciences (<https://www.nsf.gov/bio/biodmp.jsp>)
- v) Personnel Documents:
 - 1) Please upload your own:
 - a) Biographical Sketch (<https://new.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/23-1/ch-2-proposal-preparation#2D2h>)
 - b) Current and Pending Support (<https://new.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/23-1/ch-2-proposal-preparation#2D2hii>)
 - c) Collaborators and Other Affiliations documents (<https://new.nsf.gov/policies/pappg/23-1/ch-2-proposal-preparation#2D2hiii>)
 - d) Follow the guidance provided in the PAPPG; each of these documents has specific formatting or template requirements.
 - 2) After adding your lead Sponsoring Scientist's information, upload their:
 - a) Biographical Sketch
 - b) Current and Pending Support documents.
 - c) You can upload their Collaborators and Other Affiliations document to "Additional Single Copy Documents"
 - 3) If you have co-Sponsoring Scientists:
 - a) You can upload Co-Sponsoring Scientist Biographical Sketches and Current and Pending Support documents to 'Other Supplementary Documents'
 - b) You can upload their Collaborators and Other Affiliations document to "Additional Single Copy Documents".
 - c) Please note: Research.gov allows you to add multiple sponsoring scientists under the Sponsoring Scientist tab in 'Personnel Documents', but does not allow you to manage the order or indicate the lead. Thus, it may help if you upload the documents in the locations listed above. However, you will not be penalized for uploading Co-Sponsor documents here.

b) Under "May be Required"

- i) Please upload a copy of your Ph.D. Abstract (limited to one page).

c) Under "Required only for MSPRF and PRFB"

- i) Reference Letter Requests: **Reference letters must be submitted before you submit your application.** Your reference letter writers will need sufficient time to enter their letters prior to the deadline. Two (2) reference letters are required from scientists who know you well - **This should NOT be your proposed sponsor.** Review the guidelines available on the program page:
(http://www.nsf.gov/bio/prfb/applicant_how_to_apply_prfb.pdf)
- ii) Application Form: The application form is self-explanatory. However, be sure to use "Preview/Print" at the bottom of the screen to ensure the information is entered correctly.
- iii) Sponsoring Scientist Statement: Be sure that the document adheres to the instructions in the solicitation. The statement itself must not exceed three pages and should have the lead Sponsoring Scientist's Biographical Sketch appended to that document.
 - 1) Please note that your lead Sponsoring Scientist Biographical Sketch must also be uploaded under Personnel Documents.
 - 2) Co-Sponsor Biographical Sketches should be uploaded to 'Other Supplementary Documents' .

d. Under "Optional"

- i) Do not upload anything under 'Other Personnel Biographical Information'
- ii) Use 'Additional Single Copy Documents' for COA documents from Sponsoring Scientist(s)
- iii) Do not upload any additional letters of support or collaboration.

Additional Guidance for Proposal Documents

1. Project Summary: This is an abstract of the proposed research and training. You must clearly address and identify in separate statements using the three boxes: (1) an overview of your proposed fellowship activities; (2) intellectual merit; and (3) broader impacts of the activities. Without these 3 sections, your application will be returned without review. **List your sponsoring scientist(s) and institution(s) in the overview.** Upload text in the proper boxes. Do not use the 'Supplementary Document' option for the summary. Do not use jargon and abbreviations in the summary. It should be understandable by scientists not in your specialized field.

2. Project Description: This document has a 6-page limit, including all figures, tables, etc. The bibliography is saved under 'References Cited' and does not count toward the six-page limit. The research and training plan presents the research that you will conduct and the training that you will receive during the fellowship period and how they relate to your career goals. Include in the research and training plan:
 - a. a brief and informative introduction or background section;
 - b. a statement of research objectives, methods, and significance;
 - c. training objectives and plan for achieving them (these may include scientific as well as other career preparation activities);
 - d. an explanation of how the fellowship activities will enhance your career development and future research directions as well as describing how this research differs from your dissertation research, thus providing you an opportunity to broaden your scientific horizon;
 - e. a justification of the choice of sponsoring scientist(s) and host institution(s);
 - f. a timetable with goals with benchmarks for major anticipated outcomes;
 - g. a separate section headed "Broader Impacts" within the narrative that describes in detail the broader impacts of the proposed activities. If your proposal lacks this section it will be returned without review; and
 - h. for each competitive area, a description of how the research and training proposed align with the focus of the competitive area, as described in the solicitation.

3. References Cited.

Save the Bibliography here. There are no page limits on this document, but follow PAPPG guidelines (https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg22_1/pappg_2.jsp)

Final steps

When the application is complete, select 'Check Error(s) and Warning(s)' to ensure all required documents have been submitted. Please note that this does not ensure that each of the documents is in compliance with the solicitation - it is up to you to ensure that you have followed all guidelines.

Print out all the forms using the 'Print Proposal' button to double check conversions and be sure that everything has been included.

When satisfied that all documents are within the page limits and print out well, return to the 'Proposal Actions' screen, and select 'Initiate Proposal Submission'. If all documents are uploaded, the screen shows the prompt, "This proposal is ready for submission". You will also be provided a link to 'View full proposal' as a PDF.

Select 'Next' to be taken to the Certifications and Submissions page. Scroll down and read the information under 'Proposal Certifications'. Keep scrolling down and reading until you have completed the document.

Click on the check-box labeled 'I have read and agree to the certifications listed above'. Then, select 'Sign and Submit' to both electronically sign and submit your proposal to NSF.

The next screen will show your official NSF proposal number. Please note this number and use it for all correspondence with NSF about your application.

