



Center for
Scientific Review

Update: Fellowship Review and Application Changes

Mufeng Li, Ph.D.
Fellowship Point Person
Center for Scientific Review

Lystranne Maynard-Smith, Ph.D.
Co-Chair Training Subcommittee
Center for Scientific Review

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Community Input, Process, and Timeline

Sept 2021 - October 2022:

- Convened a CSR Advisory Council working group to consider how peer review of fellowship applications could be strengthened
- Initial input gathering through blog posts, >100 comments, content analyses
- Data provided to the working group
- Full CSR Advisory Council approval of recommendations, publication of working group report


October 2022-November 2022:


- Internal NIH input, approval by NIH leadership


Review Matters

Strengthening Fellowship Review

Authors

 Bruce Reed
Deputy Director


 Lystranne Maynard Smith
Scientific Review Officer

 Cibu Thomas
Scientific Review Officer

January 6, 2022

Have you applied for, sponsored, or reviewed NIH fellowship applications? We would like to hear your thoughts on what works, what doesn't, and how the process could be improved.

Natio d post

 Strengthening Fellowship Review

By Bruce Reed, Lystranne Maynard Smith, Cibu Thomas

Posted January 10, 2022

32 Comments

Guest post by Bruce Reed, Lystranne Maynard Smith, Cibu Thomas, originally released on the NIH Center for Scientific Review's [Review Matters blog](#)

Have you applied for, sponsored, or reviewed NIH fellowship applications? We would like to

Objectives of the changes

- 1. Better focus reviewer attention on three key assessments:** the fellowship candidate's preparedness and potential, research training plan, and commitment to the candidate.
- 2. Ensure that a broad range of candidates and research training contexts** can be recognized as meritorious by clarifying and simplifying the language in the application and review criteria.
- 3. Reduce bias in review** by emphasizing the commitment to the candidate, without undue consideration of sponsor and institutional reputation.

Reorganized Fellowship Review Criteria Areas

Current Fellowship Review Criteria



Fellowship Candidate



Sponsors, Collaborators,
Consultants



Research Training Plan



Training Potential



Institutional Environment &
Commitment to Training



New Fellowship Review Criteria



Candidate Preparedness and Potential



Research Training Plan



Commitment to Candidate

***No changes to Additional Review
Criteria or to Additional Review
Considerations***

Changes to the fellowship application

1. **Eliminate grades** (request courses completed)
2. **Revise the Applicant Section**
 - Better assess the candidate's scientific thinking
 - Broaden consideration of qualifications
3. **Revise the Sponsors, Collaborators and Consultants section**
 - Emphasis on sponsor's mentorship approach, plan for this trainee and fit to trainee's goals and needs
4. **Revise letters of reference**
 - Targeted, trainee-specific questions in word-limited fields
 - Intended to discourage boilerplate and to make it easier for reviewers to evaluate
5. **No significant changes to the Research Training Project Plan Section**
 - Specific Aims, Research Strategy, Responsible Conduct of Research - unchanged
6. **An optional statement of special circumstances**
 - Situations that might have hindered their progress such as harassment, the COVID-19 pandemic, or other personal or professional circumstances

Revised instructions clearly indicate who is responsible for each part of the application.

Implementation: Next Steps

Key Dates and Scope of Fellowship Funding Announcements Requiring Changes

When will the changes be implemented?



Applications submitted for **due dates on or after January 25, 2025**
Summer 2025 peer review
October 2025 Advisory Council

Applicability

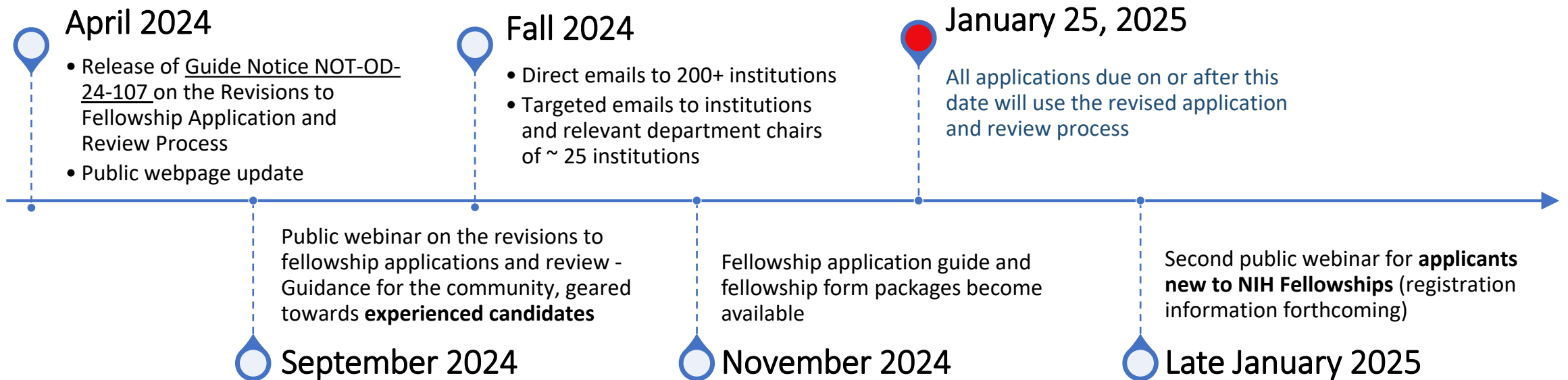


F30, F31, F32, F33, F99/K00 –
Any fellowship activity code using SF 424 - PHS Fellowship Supplemental Form
****Includes A1s even if A0 was reviewed in prior form***

Guide Notice
[NOT-OD-24-107](#)

Major Communication Milestones and Plans

- Developing communication resources aimed at two audiences – those who are completely new to NIH fellowships and those who have experience with them (and care about *changes*)
- Focusing on broad distribution and appropriate messaging



Public Page for Revisions to Fellowships

Home » Policy & Compliance » Peer Review Policies and Practices » Revisions to the NIH Fellowship Application and Review Process

POLICY & COMPLIANCE

Policy Topics

Peer Review Policies and Practices

Revisions to the NIH Fellowship Application and Review Process

Background

Changes to Fellowship Applications

Changes to the Fellowship Review Criteria

Candidate Guidance

Training and Resources

Notices, Statements, and Reports

Simplifying Review of Research Project Grant Applications

Managing Conflict of Interest

Consolidated List of Reviewer Documents

Revisions to the NIH Fellowship Application and Review Process

NIH is revising the application and review criteria for fellowship applications, beginning with those submitted January 25, 2025 and describes the goals of the change, implications for those writing and reviewing fellowship applications, and provides links to training resources.

Fellowship applications submitted on or after January 25, 2025 will follow a revised application and review criteria. The goal of the changes is to increase the chances that the most promising fellowship candidates will be consistently identified by scientific review panels. The changes will:

1. **Better focus reviewer attention on three key assessments:** the fellowship candidate's preparedness and potential, research training, and commitment to the candidate
2. **Ensure a broad range of candidates and research training contexts can be recognized as meritorious by clarifying and simplifying application and review criteria**
3. **Reduce bias in review by emphasizing the commitment to the candidate without undue consideration of sponsor and institutional affiliations**

For those with questions, please direct all inquiries to:
FellowshipReview@mail.nih.gov



Background

This page is designed to help you learn more about the peer review process and why we're revising the application and review process for NIH fellowship applications submitted for due dates on or after January 25, 2025.

NIH Grants Page on Fellowship Changes

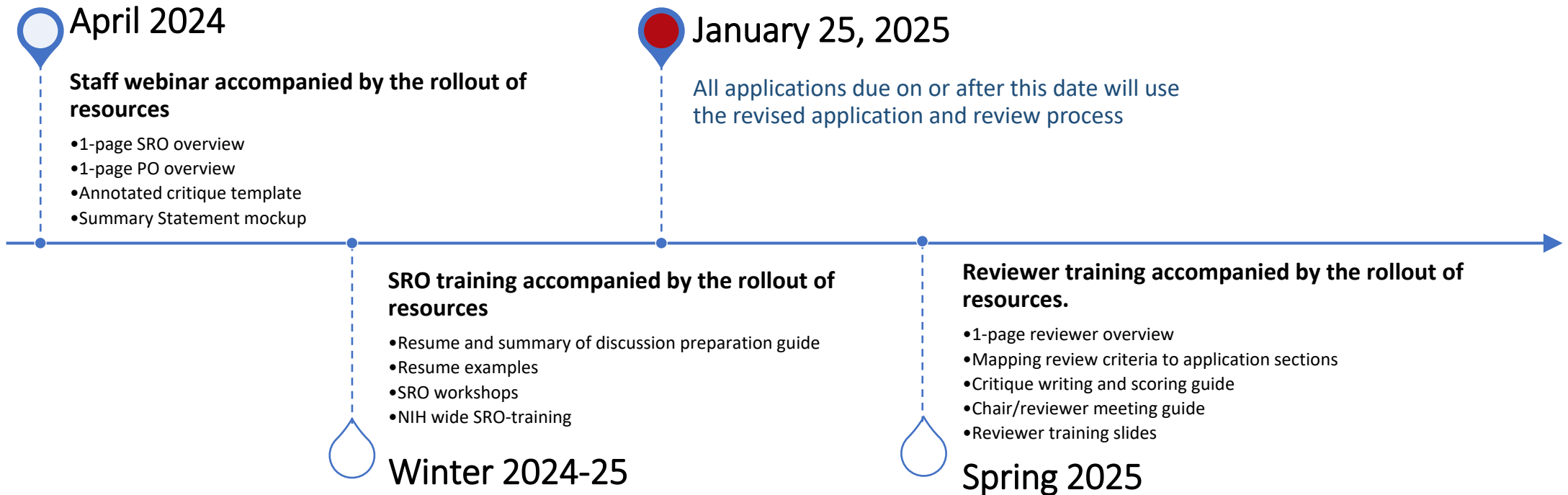
- grants.nih.gov/policy/peer/improving-nrsa-fellowship.htm

Provides:

- Background and overview of the changes
- **Candidate guidance/resources**
- FAQs
- Relevant links and other resources

Major Training Milestones and Plans

- Developing training recourses to support a culture change
- Focusing on underlying rationale, while clearly conveying the details of what's changing
- SROs will be engaged early in the process to preview resources and inform further training
- Targeted reviewer training will be done closer to 1st review meeting.



Questions?

WEBSITE <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/peer/revisions-nih-fellowship-application-review-process.htm>

EMAIL FellowshipReview@mail.nih.gov

X @NIHGrants



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