**Template guidelines:** For your grant application, the SERCC strongly recommends using the words that are in bold below as section headers. Instructions from the NIH SF424 are in blue text with additional SERCC comments in gray text. Fellowship applications are evaluated based on [review criteria](https://sercc.medicine.uiowa.edu/sites/sercc.medicine.uiowa.edu/files/2025-06/NIH%20Fellowship%20Review%20Criteria%20-%20FORMS-I_0.docx) in the parent NOFO (link downloads a summary of review criteria).

**Candidate’s Goals, preparedness, and potential**

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| **Overall Training Goals*:*** *Candidates should describe the goals for the proposed research training plan and the long-term goals for a career in biomedical research workforce. Relate the fellowship goals to the long-term career goals. Candidates should describe their motivation for pursuing a career in the biomedical research workforce.** **F30/31: Focus should be on learning to think like a scientist (i.e., how to develop, analyze, and present work); F30s should have a clinical focus.**
* **F32s: Focus should be on specific goals as well as how current training and sponsor will help with transition to an independent career.**

Sections to consider including:* Career and training goals
	+ Describe what your career goals are and the training goals needed to achieve these.
	+ Describe your motivation for pursuing a career in biomedical research.
	+ Be honest and as specific as possible.
* Gaps in training
	+ Describe what skills, theories, conceptual approaches, etc., are needed to achieve your goal. These might include expertise in: rigorous research design, experimental methods, quantitative approaches, and data analysis and interpretation.
* Sponsor
	+ Describe their field and how working in this area fits with your goals
	+ (F32) Discuss how your sponsor will help you transition to an independent career (including how they will train you in laboratory management and mentoring skills).
* Non-research activities
	+ Discuss professional development opportunities and/or clinical activities.
* Training environment
	+ Describe departmental program, including opportunities to participate in journal clubs, seminar series, meet with speakers, collaborations, networking, clinical research (if relevant).
* Outcomes
	+ Design metrics of success toward meeting your goals.
* Future Directions:
	+ Discuss how the proposed research will facilitate your transition to the next career stage.
	+ (F32s) Discuss arrangement with mentor regarding project (i.e., what components you can take with you).
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| **Candidate’s Preparedness:** *This section provides information regarding the educational, scientific, and professional experiences that prepare the candidate for the proposed research training plan. Note: information listed in the candidate’s biosketch may be expanded upon, but not simply duplicated, in this section. The candidate should address the following:* 1. *How relevant activities and experiences contributed to the candidate’s scientific development and preparation for the current research training plan. Examples may include coursework, research experiences, conference attendance, internships, and employment.*
2. *Any additional activities and experiences that demonstrate an interest and commitment to a career in the biomedical research workforce. Examples may include seeking out opportunities for research skill development or engaging in leadership, service, teaching, or outreach activities.*

Sections to consider including:* High school internship
* Undergraduate honors project
* Undergraduate research experience
* Dissertation work

For each of the above, discuss:* The scientific focus of the laboratory OR historical context for the work/study
* The research performed and techniques/skills acquired (technical skills, data analysis)
	+ Outcomes: both scientific advances (if possible) and professional development (e.g., leadership skills, presentation skills, networking, introduction to a specific field)
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| **Candidate’s Self-Assessment:** *The purpose of this self-assessment is to provide an opportunity for the candidate to define their current characteristics (such as relevant skills, abilities, traits or attitudes) and areas to develop that are likely to contribute most significantly to success in the proposed research training plan and career path. For example, the candidate may include but is not limited to describing technical (techniques or technical methods, quantitative/computational approaches), operational (practices that promote rigorous and reproducible science, research safety, animal, or human welfare) or professional (management, leadership, communication, teamwork) skills. The candidate should describe:* * *Two to four current characteristics that are likely to contribute to achieving the research training.*
	+ E.g., resilience, persistence, commitment, strong work ethic, patience, perceptiveness
* *Two to four specific areas of development during the fellowship to attain the stated research training and career goals.*
	+ E.g., specific coursework
	+ E.g., specialized technical training you need for your future career
	+ E.g., professional development skills needed for the future (presentation skills, manuscript preparation, mentoring, etc.)
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| **Scientific Perspective:** *This section is intended to provide information about the candidate’s potential to think about and express ideas within a scientific field. NIH staff have mentioned that this is an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate critical thinking about a broad scientific problem in more detail than is feasible in the Research Strategy.* *In this section, candidates should explain the following:** *Why this field of science is important and the ways the chosen research training project will advance the field.*
* *A broader, unresolved scientific question in the chosen scientific field, the importance of the problem, and the ways biomedical research might advance the scientific field.*
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