**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).

**Sponsor(s) commitment**

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| **MENTORING APPROACH AND CANDIDATE MENTORING PLAN:** *Effective mentorship is critical to the development and retention of scientists and the advancement of research. Sponsors and co-sponsors must describe their mentoring approach and the specific mentoring plan for the candidate to ensure career advancement in the biomedical research workforce.*   * *The mentoring plan should be tailored to the overall training goals outlined by the candidate and go beyond simply providing access to research environments.* * *Effective mentoring plans may include areas such as:*   + *enhancing the candidate’s understanding of scientific research*     - Describe the laboratory in which research will be performed and personnel who will contribute to training (roles and expertise)     - Describe how scientific thinking will be taught: hypothesis developoment, experimental design, data analysis/interpretation     - Describe technical skills that will be acquired (i.e., specific techniques and who will provide training)     - Describe clinical activities that will be undertaken (e.g., clinical shadowing/clerkships; volunteer experiences, if applicable)     - Describe coursework that will be completed (e.g., scientific writing and presentation; responsible conduct of research)   + *promoting the candidate’s professional development*     - Describe plans for writing manuscripts and grants     - Describe plans for lpresentation locally (laboratory meetings, departmental/interest group seminars)     - Describe plans for presentation at national/international meetings     - Describe plans for facilitating candidate’s networking at conferences     - Describe opportunities for candidate to meet with collaborators and other scientists visiting the institution   + *maintaining effective communication*     - Describe expectations for participation in laboratory meetings, seminars, journal clubs, regional meetings     - Describe expectations for participation in regularly occurring meetings with sponsor or dissertation committee     - Describe open-door policy or other approach to encourage impromptu conversations   + *aligning expectations*     - Laboratory management: research budgets, human relations     - Work/life balance, clinic/research balance   + *fostering independence*     - Describe how career development will be promoted     - Describe opportunities to mentor undergraduates in the laboratory   + *promoting training environments accessible to everyone*     - Describe efforts to include individuals from all backgrounds in your research     - Describe openness to collaboration with individuals from other disciplines |

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| **PRIOR COMMITMENT TO TRAINING AND MENTORING:** *This section may be used to demonstrate the sponsor(s) past commitment to effective training, mentoring, and career development.*   * *Previous experience is not a pre-requisite to serve as a sponsor.* * *Sponsor(s) may provide examples* ***from no more than 2–5 recent trainees at the level of the candidate*** *and describe the individualized training and mentoring offered.* * ***Simply listing former trainees and their career outcomes does not provide evidence of effective mentoring****.* * *The sponsor(s) should describe the impacts of the individualized training and mentoring on each former trainee’s scientific, educational, or career development.* * *For early-stage sponsor(s), examples may include informal training and mentoring activities conducted as a student or postdoctoral fellow.* |

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| **COMMITMENT TO THE CANDIDATE’S RESEARCH TRAINING PLAN:** *This section should contain confirmation of the sponsor(s) commitment to the candidate’s research training plan and that sponsor(s) have sufficient time to devote to the training and mentoring given their other professional and supervisory obligations. The sponsor(s) should provide:*   * *a description of the frequency, duration, and nature of meetings with the candidate throughout the training plan timeline.*   + Describe individual(s) who will provide mentoring   + Describe the length and frequency of meetings   + Describe the focus of meetings:     - Science: hypotheses, experimental design, data analysis/interpretation     - Lab management: finance, human relations     - Work/life balance, clinic/research balance     - Career development: future career plans * *a listing of how many other scientists in the research team will be supervised during the proposed fellowship award period and how the candidate will receive consistent, individualized attention* |

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| **RESEARCH TRAINING ENVIRONMENT:** *The information contained in the “Training Plan Environment” section of the Sponsor’s and Co-sponsors’ Statements should be coordinated with information provided in the Research Training Plan section or the Other Project Information Form: Facilities and Other Resources so that material is not duplicated.*  *The sponsor should describe the research training environment and how it will meet the needs of the candidate to achieve the outlined goals. The co-sponsor may include information if different from the sponsor’s description. Include any additional relevant items to promote the development of the candidate not listed elsewhere in the application. For example, describe:*   * *The sponsor(s) research training environment and how the environment will support the candidate’s development and attainment of the defined career goals.*    + *Sponsor(s) are encouraged to describe efforts to create safe, supportive, and accessible research environments.*   + *Describe the day-to-day research environment with special attention to training and how the candidate will benefit from the environment. Examples that might be included:*     - *Location of sponsor’s office relative to trainee’s lab space*     - *Informal interactions (open laboratory environment, open-door policy)*     - *Other laboratory members, or neighboring laboratory members who will provide support* * *Organizational research training environments such as available centralized research facilities or equipment needed to complete the research training project not listed elsewhere in the application. Examples might include:*   + *Core facilities and personnel in those facilities*   + *Institutes or Centers* * *Relevant and accessible organizational research training program(s) related to the candidate's area of interest.*    + *Graduate program*   + *Graduate college (e.g.,* [*Grad Success Center*](https://grad.uiowa.edu/grad-success)*)*   + [*The University of Iowa Writing Center*](https://writingcenter.uiowa.edu/) * *Opportunities for professional development and intellectual interactions*   + *For example, scientific meetings, journal clubs, seminars, and opportunities for presentations.*   + *Include items such as classes, opportunities for interaction with other scientists and any professional skills development opportunities.*   + *Describe how the sponsor will work with the candidate to develop and publish rigorous scientific products such as publications and presentations.*     - *See* [*SERCC boilerplate text*](https://sercc.medicine.uiowa.edu/sites/sercc.medicine.uiowa.edu/files/2024-11/Mentoring%20in%20writing%20paragraph_11_2024.docx) *for support that can be provided for training in writing.* |

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| **CANDIDATE’S POTENTIAL:** *The section is intended to provide information about the candidate’s main areas for development during the training, as well as their potential to benefit from the research training plan and to have a productive career in the biomedical research workforce. Sponsor(s) should provide the following for the candidate:*   * *Examples of personal characteristics (for example, skills, abilities, traits, attitudes) that are likely to significantly contribute to further advancement in the candidate’s defined career path.*    + *Take into consideration relevant indicators for success, such as scientific curiosity, resourcefulness, and persistence.* * *Areas for development to improve the candidate’s prospects of transitioning into a productive career in the biomedical research workforce. Areas may include, but are not limited to, the following skills:*    + *technical (e.g., new techniques or technical methods, quantitative or computational approaches)*   + *operational (e.g., practices that promote rigorous, reproducible, and responsible research)*   + *professional (e.g., management, leadership, communication, teamwork).*   *Indicate whether the proposed training plan will address these areas and contribute to the candidate’s development and attainment of the stated career goals.*   * *An overall assessment of the candidate’s preparedness and likelihood for success in the proposed research training plan.*   + *Provide examples, such as scientific or intellectual contributions that highlight the likelihood of achieving the training goals and advancing to a career in the biomedical research workforce.* |