Tips on Writing Successful Fellowships – A Funder’s Perspective

Karen Fernando, NIHR Academy
Introduction

The purpose of the NIHR Academy is to develop a highly-skilled academic research workforce capable of advancing the best research which improves health and care, and benefits society and the economy.
NIHR Research Training

**NIHR Research Career Pathways**

**PRE-DOCTORAL**
- Pre-Doctoral Fellowship

**DOCTORAL**
- Doctoral Fellowship

**POST-DOCTORAL (EARLY)**
- Advanced Fellowship
- Development & Skills Enhancement Award

**POST-DOCTORAL (SENIOR)**
- Research Professorship

**HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS (NON-DOCTORS/DENTISTS)**
- HEE/NIHR Pre-doctoral Clinical Academic Fellowship
- HEE/NIHR Clinical Doctoral Research Fellowship
- HEE/NIHR Clinical Lectureship
- HEE/NIHR Senior Clinical Lectureship

**DOCTORS AND DENTISTS**
- In-Practice Fellowship
- Clinical Lectureship
- Academic Clinical Fellowship

**RESEARCH TRAINING FOR ALL**
- Through NIHR Infrastructure & Schools
- Biomedical Research Centres • Collaborations for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care • Patient Safety Translational Research Centres • NIHR Schools

NIHR | National Institute for Health Research
Application process

Stage 1 application
- Eligibility and fit with remit
  - NIHR Academy
- Shortlisting
  - Lead reviewers
  - Whole Panel meeting
- Peer review (post doc levels)
  - Relevant expert reviewers

Stage 2 application
- Interview
Pre-application

• Know the process and the remit:
  - Look at the website
  - Webinars
  - Read the guidance and past Chairs’ reports
  - Contact the NIHR with any queries

• Know your audience:
  - Look up previous award holders, panel members, topics

• Start early:
  - Identify supervisors, mentors and collaborators
  - Speak to the Research Design Service
  - Clinical Trials Unit and Local Clinical Research Network
  - Consider all options
Application

• Person
  - Trajectory
  - Career outputs

• Project or programme of research
  - Scientific quality and sound methodology (will it answer the question?)
  - Appropriate scale and scope
  - Relevance of the question
  - Literature review
  - Impact of findings
  - Fit with remit
  - Meaningful involvement of patients and the public

NIHR | National Institute for Health Research
Application

• **Training**
  - Meets needs of candidate and project

• **Host environment (institution, supervisor, mentor)**
  - REF rating
  - Track record in relevant field
  - Time and commitment

• **Take Advice from:**
  - Supervisors / mentors
  - Collaborators
  - Methodologist (s)
  - Finance lead
  - Patients/Service Users
Application

• Approvals and sign off
  - Are the relevant people available
  - Don’t be last minute and…

• Do not miss the deadline!!

• Check your spelling
Interview

- Panels between 10-14 members + NIHR/HEE/DHSC staff and observers
- 5 minute presentation
- 2 lead interviewers
  - 1st focusses on research project
  - 2nd focusses on training plan, supervision, career
- Public Panel members
  - Focus on PPI
- Open questions from whole Panel
Interview

• Practice
  - Mock interviews are usually the worst!

• Presentation
  - Not too many slides
  - Don’t go over time

• Behaviour
  - It is OK to be nervous
  - Confident but not over confident
  - Don’t get defensive
  - Admit what you don’t know and be happy to take advice
  - Relax and be yourself
Interview

The project
- Know it inside and out
- Has anything altered since submission?
- Know the methods and identify the expertise
- Think through alternatives

Training and Development
- Identify your training needs
- How will the training support your project and future career intentions

The future you
- Be clear where you want to be
- What is does this fellowship mean to your career
Next Steps and further information

• Guidance notes and deadlines for calls are all available on our website, but if you have questions please contact us!

  www.nihr.ac.uk

Contact: academy@nihr.ac.uk  0113 532 8444
Thank you!