NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program
CLA Workshop

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Basics

- Reiterate:
  - read instructions carefully
  - ensure content required for each part
  - formatting can help (what you bold/underline) – example
  - Organize relevant sections
  - Writing: avoid long sentences. Be clear and specific
  - Use paragraphs of reasonable length (not overly long)

Discipline

- NSF administers the graduate fellowship in clusters of disciplines.

SOCIOLOGY & GEOGRAPHIC SCIENCE
- Geography
- History and Philosophy of Science
- Science Policy
- Sociology
- Urban and Regional Planning

Implies a proposal can be reviewed by at least one person from outside your discipline. Of the three reviewers, typically two will be from the discipline and can speak to concerns, if any, of the reviewer from outside the discipline

- Need discipline based writing of research statement. (Graduate methods – research design)

Review Process (1)

- Typically 3 reviewers for each proposal.
- Each reviewer scores independently and uploads score + comments. Scores between 0 and 50. Academic level to be kept in mind
- Detailed instructions to reviewers
- Each reviewer assigns a rating for each review Criterion (Excellent, Very Good, Good, Fair, or Poor) and provide constructive written comments that support the assigned rating.
- Reviewers are evaluating individuals, not research proposals, based on the evidence provided in the applications.

Review Process (2)

- Panel of reviewers is convened for discussion over 2-3 days (panel is predominantly from the main discipline)
- Discussions are based on Z-scores – to address wide discrepancy among reviewers scores. Reviewers may be adjust scores especially if a reviewer, from a specific research area which the proposal is based on, explains the merits
- At the end of each session, scores are revised to circulate a ranking order to panelists
- Overall goal of panel: create three "Quality Groups." Scores enable ranking of applicants
- Examples of concerns: weak theoretical framework; too narrow and not innovative; unclear or inappropriate data/methods; statements not related

Overall Record

- Overall record (details to be completed in the application form) matters
  - Academic; Publishing & research presentations; Service
- Not merely number of publications. Preparation and promise/potential
- Should be able to tie academic record and proposed research as part of a paragraph on intellectual merit
- Service and Broader impact statement/para should match
- Reviewers must address the two Merit Review Criteria : Intellectual Merit encompasses potential to advance knowledge Broader Impacts encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.
- Recommendation letters

Points – Preparing an Application

- What to ask of your draft material?
  - Research Statement: single clear project (important questions and innovative), clarity, comprehensiveness, evidence of ability and support to carry out the project
  - Personal Statement: narration of experiences and possibly relevance to project; relevant examples; skills and strengths
  - Are statements related? [Both statements must be inter-connected even if written separately.]
  - Be careful about picking up advise from those whoa re unfamiliar with this specific fellowship.