

NH&MRC Fellowships:

“Getting in, staying in and climbing the ladder”

“The art of grantsmanship will not turn mediocre science into a fundable proposal. However, poor grantsmanship will, and often does, turn very good science into an unfundable proposal. Good writing will not save bad ideas, but bad writing can kill good ones”.

Jacob Kraicer, MD, PhD
Professor
Department of Physiology
Faculty of Medicine
University of Toronto

NH&MRC Fellowships:

“The purpose of the NHMRC Research Fellowships Scheme is to provide opportunities for outstanding biomedical and health researchers with proven track records to undertake research that is both of major importance in its field and of significant benefit to Australian health and medical research. Research Fellowships offered by the NHMRC are prestigious awards and are, consequently, highly sought after and extremely competitive”.

NH&MRC Fellowships:

The Process:

NH&MRC Fellowships:

- 1) Plan ahead (years not days!)**
- 2) Write the Application**
- 3) Identify Assessors**
- 4) Read, re-read and read again, ask colleagues to read**
- 5) Submit (open 9/12/05, 27/1/06 Monash, close 9/2/06)**
- 6) Applications go out for review**
- 7) NH&MRC nominates appropriate fellowship panel**
- 8) 1sp, 2sp, panel and chair read reports**
- 9) Interview (26 - 30 June 2006)**

NH&MRC Fellowships:

Are you Competitive? If so at what level?

Decide which level to apply for (SRF A, SRF B, PRF, SPRF)

**Nb. If initial entry you will only be considered for the level applied for (exception SRF A/B)
Renewal normally 5th year, if unsuccessful an extra year is granted, if again unsuccessful
Grant in Aid awarded for 7th year)**

Read other successful applications (submitted at the same level)

Leave yourself plenty of time (at the RO 27/1/06)

**Make a list of career/research highlights to help formulate
executive summary and overall pitch:**

A Good Executive Summary is Crucial!

Track Record, Scholarship, Contributions to the Field

(Remember it is relative to opportunity)

Publications (nominate 4)

*(highlight seminal contributions, specialised contributions, contributions to the discipline
If Impact factor low, is the journal best in field)*

Grants

(local (easy to forget), national, international, biotech, pharma etc.)

Peer recognition (important!)

*(Invitations to speak- plenary, invited session, specialist meetings, seminars, education etc.)
Editorial boards, Committees (local national and international), Advisory boards)
Use travel budgets smartly!!!!*

Prizes Awards

(International, national, state and institutional)

Research Translation

Commercialisation, collaborations (pharma, biotech etc), consultancies, patents

Track Record, Scholarship, Contributions to the Field

Clinical activities

Leadership roles, Participation in College, society or health care facility committees; emerging profile in health policy forums.

Public health

Leadership or key role in design, conduct, publication and advocacy for policy and practice of Seminal research; key responsibility for changes in concept, practice or priority of research etc.

Research training

PhD supervision, teaching, post doc supervision, (how have your students progressed?)

Professional activities

Peer review committees, grant reviews, professional societies, office bearing positions, meeting organisation etc.

Identify Assessors

This is very important as the NH&MRC will use these guys!

Chose senior scientists, your internationals should be at professorial level and/or Directors of institutes (the panel will probably not have heard of these folk!). You want someone who knows how to write a good reference! As a courtesy let the potential assessor know that they could be approached and highlight the areas that are important for their report (your international standing!!).

Chose local assessors as above, it helps if they are familiar with the NH&MRC fellowship scheme.

Promotion

Promotion is usually requested in synchrony with a request for renewal. Alternatively, Fellows may apply for a promotion out of synchrony in years 2 or 3 during the course of an existing five year Research Fellowship. Promotions will not be considered in years 1 or 4 of an existing Fellowship.

Competitive applications for Promotion out of Synchrony will be assessed and ranked with applicants for Initial Appointment, Renewal and Renewal with Promotion. To gain promotion, the applicant must be ranked above the funding cut-off for that year.

Applicants who are successful in gaining promotion out of synchrony will commence a new 5 year award.

Applicants who seek promotion from SRFA to PRF may be considered for promotion to the SRFB level if not competitive for the higher level. This process applies to both Renewals with Promotion and Promotion out of Synchrony.

NH&MRC Fellowships:

- 1) Write the Application**
- 2) Identify Assessors**
- 3) Read, re-read and read again, ask colleagues to read**
- 4) Submit**
- 5) Applications go out for review**
- 6) NH&MRC nominates appropriate fellowship panel**
- 7) 1sp, 2sp and chair read reports**
- 8) Interview**

The Interview:

There are currently three Fellowship panels covering a broad number of research fields. In general terms:

Panel A includes the fields of Biochemistry, Immunology, Virology, Oncology, Parasitology, Infectious Diseases and Genetics.

Panel B includes the fields of Physiology, Neuroscience, Pharmacology and Endocrinology.

Panel C includes the fields of Epidemiology, Health Innovation, applied Statistics, clinical Sciences and applications for Practitioner Fellowships.

The Interview (contd.): :

Dry runs are crucially important! Chose an NH&MRC experienced interview panel, they will find the holes in your application, ask the difficult questions and then help formulate appropriate responses. Dry runs are always worse than the real thing!

At interview (~20min) , the primary spokesman will likely ask for a CV update (have 8 copies) and then likely ask for a brief summary of your application and why you consider yourself competitive (be prepared & be brief). The questioning will likely focus on concerns raised by reviewers, and other panel members, the 2sp will then ask any further questions, then the rest of the panel will be invited to ask questions make comment.

The Interview (contd.):

Applicants will be asked to address performance in terms of:

Excellence of scientific contributions;

Competitive edge in the international arena and how this will be maintained and enhanced;

Expected outcomes at the completion of a five year fellowship.

Finally you will be asked if you have any questions for the panel or are there areas that have not been covered?

Probably best to be polite and thank the committee, unless there is something crucial that needs to be raised (unlikely). If you feel that you have fluffed an answer or the committee may have misunderstood something, this is a chance to revisit and correct (be careful!).

Good Luck

More info on:

<http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/fellows/apply/granttype/career/index.htm>