General Suggestions for the GRFP application

Please pay careful attention to the application preparation instructions in the FastLane module and the Program Solicitation.

**Note your application deadline.** Your application deadline will be determined by the primary field of study listed on the Proposed Graduate Program section of the application. If you designate your primary field as "Engineering - Electrical", for example, you must submit your application on the Engineering deadline, even if your program is in a Computer Science department.

**Do not wait until the last minute to prepare and submit your application materials.** Give yourself time to review your entire application before you submit it.

**Use the preview feature** available in the FastLane application to make sure the uploaded essays are the ones you want submitted. Make sure you have not uploaded a draft version, and double check that you uploaded each essay correctly. Once an application has been submitted, it is not possible to change the essays in any way.

**Make sure you follow the essay formatting instructions** regarding page limits, font type and size, margins, and line spacing. Failure to follow the instructions may result in your application being ineligible for review.

**Save a copy of your application.** You can download a PDF file of the application on FastLane by selecting "View/Print Application" under the Application Package Optional Task List.

If you have any questions about the application process or requirements, please contact the GRF Operations Center at info@nsfgrfp.gov or (866) 673-4737.

Application Materials

The following material is required from all applicants to the NSF Graduate Research Fellowship Program:

1. **Personal Statement Essay**
2. **Previous Research Experience Essay**
3. **Proposed Plan of Research Essay**
4. **3 Reference Letters**
5. **Academic Transcripts**

Personal Statement
Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:

1. Why are you fascinated by your research area?
2. What examples of leadership skills and unique characteristics do you bring to your chosen field?
3. What personal and individual strengths do you have that make you a qualified applicant?
4. How will receiving the fellowship contribute to your career goals?
5. How does the information in your Personal Statement address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

Previous Research Experience

Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:

1. What are all of your applicable experiences?
2. For each experience, what were the key questions, methodology, findings, and conclusions?
3. Did you work in a team and/or independently?
4. How did you assist in the analysis of results?
5. How did your activities address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

Proposed Plan of Research

Important questions to ask yourself before starting the essay:

1. What issues in the scientific community are you most passionate about?
2. Do you possess the technical knowledge and skills necessary for conducting this work, or will you have sufficient mentoring and training to complete the study?
3. Is this plan feasible for the allotted time and institutional resources?
4. How will your research contribute to the “big picture” outside the academic context?
5. How can you draft a plan using the guidelines presented in the essay instructions?
6. How does your proposed research address the Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts criteria?

Reference Letters

Applicants are required to submit three reference letters. Reference writers should use letterhead, if possible, and include the following information: Name and Title of reference writer, Department, and Institution or Organization.

The reference letter should provide details explaining the nature of the relationship to the applicant, comments on the applicant's potential and prior research experiences, statements about the applicant's academic potential and prior research experiences, statements about the applicant's proposed research, and any other information to enable review panels to evaluate the application according to the NSF Merit Review Criteria of Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts.

Applicants can improve their chances of obtaining strong reference letters by doing the following:

1. Choose your references carefully; choose people that can speak to your abilities and potential, rather than someone with a prominent title.
2. Provide referees sufficient time to write a strong letter.
3. Discuss the application and share your essays with them.
4. Inform them that reference letters should reflect both your "intellectual merit" and "broader impacts."
5. Track submission of letters using your status page in the FastLane application module - if necessary, remind reference writers about deadline. No late letters will be accepted under any circumstances.
6. Have a backup reference in case one of your other reference writers cannot submit their letter.

Academic Transcripts

Your academic transcript is the evaluators' opportunity to view the courses you have taken, allowing them to determine your level of preparation for your proposed plan of research. Thus, it is a significant component of a complete application.

An academic transcript is required for every institution you have listed in the application module. If the same transcript applies to more than one listing in the Education and Work Experience section of your application, you should upload the same transcript for each applicable listing.
A droplet of clotted human blood plasma flows through a winding microfluidic channel, surrounded by an inert carrier fluid. This system was used to demonstrate that small quantities of activators initiate blood clotting only in plasma that is mixed slowly or not at all, and that rapid mixing slows or prevents blood clotting. This finding may explain some of the variability seen in clinical clotting assays used in hospitals to diagnose diseases, and suggests such assays may be improved by controlling the rate of mixing.

Image is courtesy of Fellow Rebecca Pompano from the University of Chicago.