

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The biographical sketches are the primary means used by reviewers to score the INVESTIGATOR(S) core-review criterion for your application. As such, they are important contributors to reviewers' assessment of feasibility of the project in your hands and those of your research team. Extensive thought should be given to the preparation of this part of the application, therefore.

Application Guide characterization of the INVESTIGATOR(S) core-review criterion (Section 6 of Part I, Peer Review Process—Research Project Evaluation Criteria):

“Are the PD/PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If Early Stage Investigators or New Investigators, or in the early stages of independent careers, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? If the project is collaborative or multi-PD/PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance and organizational structure appropriate for the project?”

Given the relative importance of the Biographical Sketch in the review process, never simply copy and use unedited biosketches from other applications as a means of saving time. To do so is a serious tactical error, in our opinion. Those earlier biographical sketches were prepared to support other applications, not yours. For example, the Personal Statements may not be as pertinent to your proposal as they should be. In addition, it is likely that each will look different with respect to formatting and, in some cases, typeface. All should look alike to emphasize that yours is a fully integrated research team, not a bunch of disparate parts that have been cobbled together at the last minute to get the money for which you are applying. Finally, the biographical sketches will almost surely be out of date if the “copy-paste” approach is used without updating. To ensure that each biosketch maximally supports your proposal and, at the same time, contributes to the image of an integrated whole, we recommend the approach that is detailed later in this Chapter, under the “Tips on Preparation” subsection.

Format of the Biographical Sketch

The instructions for preparing the Biographical Sketch are offered in the *Application Guide* under the title, “Additional NIH and Other PHS Agencies Instructions for a Biographical Sketch” (9 pages into subsection 4.5 of Part I), are provided in the text box, below.

“Use the sample *format* on the Biographical Sketch Format Page [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424R-R_biosketch_VerC.docx] to prepare this section for **all** (modular *and* other) grant applications. Include biographical sketches of all **senior/key personnel and Other Significant Contributors**. The Biographical Sketch may not exceed five pages per person. This 5-page limit includes the table at the top of the first page. See the sample of a completed Biographical Sketch at [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424R-R_biosketch sample_VerC.docx](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424R-R_biosketch_sample_VerC.docx).”

If you create all of the biographical sketches for your application using Science Experts Network Curriculum Vitae (SciENCv; <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sciencv>), you will ensure that they conform to *Application Guide* instructions. Should you want to prepare your Biographical Sketch us-

ing SciENcv, a YouTube tutorial is offered at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRWy-3GXhtU&feature=youtu.be>). There is also a User Guide (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK154494>). As of this writing, there is also a relevant podcast (<http://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2015/03/31/new-podcasts-on-the-nih-biosketch-and-sciencv>), “Using SciENcv to create an NIH Biosketch”. Regardless of how you elect to prepare this part of your proposal, we recommend that you pattern the content of the biographical sketches after our modification of NIH’s sample, which we offer at the end of this Chapter.

You must adhere to the NIH-mandated typeface and font-size requirements (subsection 2.6 of Part I of the *Application Guide*). After completing each Biographical Sketch, convert it to a PDF file and upload it into each individual’s Profile using the “Add Attachment” button to the right of the “Attach Biographical Sketch” subheading.

Despite the instructions and examples that NIH and we provide, our experience is that most applicants still make numerous small mistakes in the preparation of their research team’s biographical sketches. Such errors are completely avoidable. All you have to do is read and follow the instructions carefully. It is important to do so because, if your biosketches are replete with small mistakes that are clearly attributable to not reading and following instructions, it says something very negative about your attention to detail – and what is research about other than attention to detail?

Education/Training Table. This part of the Biographical Sketch should begin with your baccalaureate degree (or equivalent) and conclude with postdoctoral training, i.e., the entries should be in chronological order. A common mistake is to put postdoctoral training (including medical internship, residency and fellowship training) under Positions and Honors, rather than in this table. The small-print instructions on the form above the table make clear that postdoctoral training of any kind belongs here, not under Positions and Honors. Include enough information for each entry that it is clear which institutions were involved in your education/training and when. Make sure that both the two-digit month and four-digit year of completion, not just the year, are included in the table’s “Completion Date MM/YYYY” column. If fewer/additional rows are needed in this Word table, use the “Table” dropdown from the toolbar to manipulate the layout, as needed. Vertical and horizontal lines can be moved left and right or up and down, respectively, by clicking on the relevant line and then dragging it to the new location.

Section A - Personal Statement. As noted earlier, the purpose of the biographical sketches is to support feasibility of the project in your hands and those of the assembled research team. The Personal Statement is one of the most important contributors to reviewers’ appreciation of that. Here, you have the opportunity to tell reviewers why each member of the research team has been included. In other words, how each member’s attributes complement those of the PD/PI and other members of the research team, thereby increasing the likelihood that the project will be successful.

You should also view this section of the Biographical Sketch as a double-edged sword. Used in the way it is supposed to be used it can greatly help to build your case with reviewers. On the other hand, if it is used, even in part, for self-aggrandizement, it can almost be guaranteed to put them off, perhaps to the extent that they may not read most of what you have written. So avoid glowing subjective appraisals of yourself, your research team and/or your project. Stick to objective, defensible facts that will inform reviewers as to why you and your research team are qualified and prepared to undertake the proposed project.