

After the Review: Revision and Resubmission

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Your CAREER proposal was declined; what's next?



- Your project was reviewed by senior faculty experts whose combined expertise spans the range of topics considered in the panel.
- Take some time after receiving notice; let the reviews settle before analyzing them.
- Reflect on panel summary primarily and then individual reviews.
- Take note of positive aspects of the review(s) and read for the largest impact adjustments to the project. Look for key words: “Novelty”, Innovative”, Transformative”
 - Panelists are almost always asked to provide *constructive* feedback that can help the proposal improve upon resubmission!
- Look for criticisms that were mentioned more than once
- Make an appointment (via e-mail) with your program director for additional insight.
 - Can be useful to have some ideas for addressing concerns to run by the program director

Common Proposal Deficiencies



- Project concept was not well-supported by substantive literature review
- Project's scope and approach were not clearly defined – What you were going to do was not stated early in the proposal
- The project's activities were too broad and numerous for the time period and resources (5-year project, 1 full time graduate student)
- The project's activities were narrow in scope, better suited for a single-PI unsolicited NSF proposal.
- Integration of research and education was not clear to the reviewers
- The project's outcomes were not clearly stated
 - Fundamental knowledge and innovation and its importance to the field (IM)
 - Clear results from 5-year project for societal outcomes (BI)

What to ask your program manager



- The PI should list questions for the PD ahead of asking for an appointment.
- An appointment with the PD will only be valuable if the PI's questions were not already answered by the panelists, through the reviews and panel summary.
- PDs are extremely helpful, but they are also extremely busy!!
 - You want to make sure that your meeting is efficient and that you get what you need from the discussion
 - The PD is unlikely to be able to meet continuously throughout the crafting of the resubmission.
- You can mention the proposed adjustments/changes you have considered during the time you took to reflect on your feedback.
 - But remember, your program manager may not be an expert in your field
 - Your questions can be technical, but should be “bigger picture”
 - Program managers can provide some context as to the group discussion

What to ask your program manager



- Is the core concept proposed a good fit with the CAREER program?
 - Basically, is this salvageable?
 - Are we looking at hanging some new pictures, changing paint color?
 - Tearing down to studs & frame and renovating?
 - Or should the proposal be built from the basement back up, with a new topic, entirely new direction...

Other Considerations



- Is the proposed research sufficiently independent of the PI's PhD and postdoc advisor?
- Would project advance PI's long-term CAREER vision – what do you want to be known for
- Is the project more than incremental?
- Scope and ambition: is the research *sufficiently ambitious* and doable in 5 years (not more, not less)?
- Likelihood that the project will achieve effective integration of research and educational activities
- Lack of testable hypothesis – Program dependent

Other Considerations



- When crafting a resubmission it is important that PIs realize that the panelists who will review the resubmission have in most cases not seen their previous submission, hence the resubmitted proposal should stand on its own, and past submission is irrelevant to their assessment.
- You cannot count on institutional memory since panels are re-formed each year.
- If the proposal goes to the same PD (often the case) they may remember previous years' submissions, but the PD does not generally participate in the panel discussion!

Questions??