

STANFORD BIOSCIENCES

GRANT WRITING ACADEMY

Thank you for participating in this Faculty Review Workshop, which is key to the success of our grant writers. Today, **our goal is to strengthen specific aims documents**. We ask that you adhere to the structure outlined by the grant coaches as we find that this format provides fast, organized, and effective feedback - ensuring maximum benefit from your time here.

TODAY'S TIMELINE:

Introductions (10 min)

Grant Coach Reviews Roles for Faculty Review Workshop (5 min)

Faculty Review (~25 min per trainee)

- Part 1: Read the Writer's specific aims and prioritize oral comments. The worksheet on the backside of this page may be used to organize your feedback for the writer – it is used in our peer review sessions. (7 min)
- Part 2: Readers provide revision priorities to the silent writer who writes down suggestions. (7 min)
- Part 3: Writer initiates dialog with readers to clarify feedback and elucidate potential solutions for addressing comments. (10 min)
 - e.g. Writer could ask for clarification
 - Writer could orally summarize feedback to confirm understanding
 - Writer could initiate a discussion about apparent contradictions in reader response
 - Writer could suggest or solicit potential solutions

Please remember that effective feedback is:

Prioritized (more important issues first)

Supportive (respectful, attentive to writer's purposes)

Specific (pointing to concrete features of the text, offering explicit reasoning)

Descriptive or questioning (non-judgmental, reader-based)

Future-Oriented (focused on next steps, what is possible)

WORKSHEET FOR PEER FEEDBACK ON SPECIFIC AIMS

Consider the Specific Aims draft from a reader's point of view, keeping in mind the instructions (e.g. NIH's instructions are below), as well as the strategic advice offered by *The Grant Application Writer's Workbook*. Use this worksheet to make notes about the things you'll discuss with the writer.

NIH Specific Aims Instructions (as an example): "State concisely the goals of the proposed research and summarize the expected outcome(s), including the impact that the results of the proposed research will exert on the research field(s) involved. List succinctly the specific objectives of the research proposed, e.g., to test a stated hypothesis, create a novel design, solve a specific problem, challenge an existing paradigm or clinical practice, address a critical barrier to progress in the field, or develop new technology."

1. Does the opening sentence engage the reader's interest in way that is connected to the funding agency's? Is the current state of knowledge in the field clearly and adequately represented in a way that focuses the reader's attention on what is important and interesting about the proposed research? (If yes, report back to the writer what you saw as the critical focus; if no, ask questions or describe your experience as a reader.)

2. Is a gap in the knowledge base or unmet need established and explained? Does it highlight what the research proposal will address? (Explain.)

3. Is the purpose of the research clearly established, e.g., by way of a central hypothesis? (And does it make sense in terms of the described gap in the knowledge base or unmet need)? (Explain.)

5. Are the specific aims clearly stated? Are all aims directly linked to and all relevant to the central hypothesis? Are the aims written in such a way that no matter how the hypothesis tests (i.e. invalidated) the aim's objectives will be accomplished?

6. Are the expected outcomes and impact clearly and compellingly stated? Does the expected outcomes directly address the mission of the funding announcement (i.e. obtaining individualized, mentored training for NIH F / K)?

7. Structure & Organization: Do the individual paragraphs work together well to support the whole? Is each paragraph well placed and does each have a clear focus? Is the space on the page well utilized?

8. Coherence: Do sentences read clearly together so that it is easy (enough) to follow the logical development of ideas?

Prioritize. *Based on your comments above, what are the most important things for the writer to focus on as s/he develops and refines the section?*

1.

2.

3.