



# Pathway to Independence:

## Preparing for the K99/R00 and the NIH Review Process

**Purpose:** This "Early K99" award will help researchers to complete needed mentored training and transition in a timely manner to independent, tenure-track or equivalent faculty positions (R00).

**Eligibility:** No citizenship requirement; less than 4 years postdoctoral research experience.

**Benefit:** Provides up to 5 years of support in 2 phases:  
1-2 years: K99—mentored                      up to 3 years: R00—independent

## Specific aims/Project summary/Projective narrative\* [critically important]



- Provide a conceptual overview.
- Outline goals, objectives, and expected outcomes (see **SMART**).
- Write clearly.
- Grab the reviewer's attention.
- Generate enthusiasm for the project.
- Narrative can stand alone.

### SMART objectives and aims for K99/R00:

**Specific** – Be precise about what you are going to do.

**Measurable** – What evidence will you produce to show that you have reached your goal?

**Achievable** – Don't attempt too much. A less ambitious but completed objective is better than an over-ambitious one that is unachievable.

**Realistic** – Do you have the necessary resources (time, money, skills) to achieve the objective?

**Time constrained** – Determine when each stage needs to be completed. Allow time for unexpected delays.

### Section Length:

Specific aims:  
**1 page**

Project Summary:  
**30 lines of text**

Project Narrative:  
**3 sentences**

## K99/R00 Proposal Preparation

- ⇒ Follow the Career Development (K) instructions in the [SF424 \(R&R\) Application Guide](#)
- ⇒ Review the [NIH Grant Scoring System and Procedure](#) and [K99/R00 Proposal Components](#)
- ⇒ Work with your postdoc mentor and organization to develop an application for support.
- ⇒ OTHER RESOURCES:  
[Anatomy of a Successful K99 Application](#)  
[Advice on how to apply for the NIH K99/R00 Pathway to Independence Award](#)

# Research Strategy Attachment

There are **2 major narrative** pieces in this section:

## 1. Candidate information

- Candidate's Background
- Career Goals and Objectives
- Plans for Career Development
- Plans for Training Activities During the Award Period
- Justification for the mentored (K99) phase and plans for transition to independence
- Timeline with milestones, as well as methods

12 pages are allowed for both pieces.  
Consider:  
• 6 pages for Candidate Info  
• 6 pages for Research Plan

## 2. Guidelines for the Research Strategy/Research Plan

Explaining the **significance**, **innovation**, and **approach** of your research is crucial to an NIH grant proposal. Use **3 Moves** from the **CaRS\*** approach [Create a Research Space] to craft yours:

Applications are only as good as the ideas they propose.

### Move 1: Establish a territory [the situation]

- **Why** is this research important? Describe the problem and provide evidence of the importance.
- **What** is the current state of knowledge, consensus, practice or description of the area?
- **How** has prior research generally addressed the issue? Synthesize prior research.

Good, clear ideas give rise to good, clear goals and objective statements.

### Move 2: Establish a niche [the problem]

- **How** will your research fill the gap? Is there an opposing view that undermines prevailing view? Is there an understudied aspect of the research?
- **What** are the key questions about consequences of the gap? "Despite X, it remains unclear why Y."
- **Why** will your research expand upon or clarify the prior research? Continue the tradition of research in this area. "Therefore..."

### Move 3: Occupy the niche [the solution]

- **So What?** Outline the purpose(s) of your research. Include relevance to public health.
- **How** does the current knowledge inform your research? Announce principle findings.
- **How** is your proposed plan organized and actionable? Explain rationale.

\*Adapted from [USC's Creating a Research Space](#).

Flyer information adapted from "Pathway to Independence: Preparing for the K99/Roo and the NIH Review Process" by Jonathan Meyer, Rice office of Research Development