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.

**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

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*Note: Section Length:

- Specific aims: 1 page
- Project Summary: 30 lines of text
- Project Narrative: 3 sentences*
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

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:

**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.

**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

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

Applications are only as good as the ideas they propose.