Preparing for a K08 Application

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Overview

- Planning your team
- Planning your timeline
- Planning your training
- Setting yourself up for success

Planning your team

Identifying mentors

- **Primary mentor had time for me**
  - Track record of significant collaboration (CFAR mentor) and publication
  - Had mentored others through successful Ks to R-level NIH awards
  - Was available to review multiple iterations of Aims and science
  - Did not have content expertise
- **Secondary mentors complemented the application in other ways**
  - Epidemiologist who could support my analysis and training
  - Track record of collaboration, publication
- **Mentor at your global health site**
  - Context expertise
  - Content expertise
  - Track record of collaboration & publication

Planning your team

- **Collaborators**
  - Complemented mentoring team
  - Named collaborators to support various aspects of training
  - *My strategy*: Included NCI-funded researchers in Botswana as collaborators
- **Scientific advisory committee (SAC)**
  - Leader at my international site (NIH networks) – context expertise
  - Senior clinician and researcher (not NIH-funded) – content expertise
  - Regional research leader (not NIH-funded) – research conduct expertise
- **Tip: weave people into your narrative**
  - Be specific about frequency of meetings (e.g., attending their monthly lab meetings)

Planning your application timeline

- **Find a timeline that works for you**
  - Set deadlines for draft versions of Aims, Candidate & Science sections
  - Don’t forget about the administrative components
    - Get templates/drafts from other people
    - Draft letters as you go along
      - Letters of recommendation (3)
      - Letters of support (from all collaborators and SAC members)
- **Manage your mentor**
  - Set up calendar holds for weekly or biweekly meetings
  - Remind them a few days before each meeting of what you want to cover

Training plan

Table 1: Training area, current skills and training goals		
Training area	Past experience / current skills	K08 award training goals
Statistical analysis	Frequencies, proportions, sensitivity, specificity and positive and negative predictive values	Sample size, tests of significance, regression, receiver operator curves, survival analysis, diagnostics statistics
Study design	Longitudinal cohort design, study database set up, research team training, practical logistics	Advanced study design: comparative effectiveness, nested case control. Data management, quality assurance, RCR
Implementation science	Program implementation Monitoring and evaluation	Theories and frameworks, data sources, outcome measures, ethical / regulatory issues

Table 2. Training area, mentorship, training activity and evaluation metrics			Year				
Training Area	**Mentorship**	**Training activity and evaluation**	1	2	3	4	5
Statistical analysis	**RLS** **MH** SG (Collab)	Coursework: Intro to Biostats, Statistics for Medical Research II, Statistics for Medical Research Advanced (BST206/207/208), Intro to Clinical Epidemiology (EPI208), Linear and Longitudinal regression (BST215), Analytic Methods for Epidemiology (EPI522), Confounding Control: A Component of Causal Inference (EPI524)	x	x			
		Evaluation: at least 2 peer-reviewed publications and 2 conference presentations from Aim 1 in years 2 & 3; at least 2 peer-reviewed publications and 2 conference presentations from Aim 2 in years 4 & 5.		x	x	x	x
Study design	**RLS** **MH** **DRM**	Coursework: Design and conduct of trials in preventive medicine (EPI527), Study designs in epidemiology (Coursera), Population health: Study design (Coursera)			x		
		Evaluation: Develop/submit an R01 of an effectiveness /implementation hybrid study evaluating cervical cancer screening in WLHIV in year 5.					x
Implementation science	RK (Collab) SDP (Collab) PP (SAC) **DRM**	Coursework: Implementation research in Health and Healthcare (HPM284); National Cancer Institute's Training Institute for Dissemination and Implementation Research in Cancer; informal work with Harvard's implementation science working group	x		x		
		Evaluation: Develop implementation strategy and pilot implementation study and carry out pilot study for Aim 3. Develop/submit R01 as above				x	x

Setting yourself up for success

- **Read successful K applications**
  - 1 from my mentor's prior mentee who was successful K → R
  - 2 from Botswana
  - 1 from NCI
  - 1 from another OB/GYN applicant
  - None in my specific content area — that's okay
- **Get outside reviews before submission**
  - Asked an experienced NIH researcher without content expertise to review my science
  - Asked my mentor's administrator to review administrative details
- **Mock K panel review**
  - CFAR organized a mock panel at my institution — invaluable preparation
  - What are the grant killers?

The waiting game and post-award

- **Be ready for feedback**
  - I got funded on the first try — and still got feedback ☺
- **When you receive your award:**
  - Stick to your aims
  - If you diverge, discuss with your Program Officer and formalize the change
- **Show productivity**
  - Conferences / publications
  - Local / regional / national meetings
  - Requests for expert input
  - Impact on policy
- **Embrace productive divergence**
  - Accept changes from your training plan, but show progress — and feel it
  - I got a PhD instead ☺

Questions

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