Working with a Program Officer (What’s in it for you?)

Karen Cone (kccone@nsf.gov)
Program Officer (aka Director)
Biological Sciences Directorate
Division of Molecular and Cellular Biosciences
Genetic Mechanisms Cluster
Supports **basic** research and education via grants

- Discipline-based structure
- Cross-disciplinary programs
- Annual budget \(\sim\$ 8\) billion

- \(>50,000\) proposals; \(\sim12,000\) new awards per year supporting \(\sim350,000\) scientists, educators and students
NSF Organization: Scientific Staff

President → Director

Assistant Director of a Directorate

Division Director
  Deputy Division Director

Program Officer
  aka
  Program Director
**Program Officers**

**Who are we?**

- **Permanent Federal employees**
  - Often former faculty
  - Working full-time at NSF
  - May be conducting research part-time

- **Rotators**
  - Current faculty
  - Working at NSF and maintaining research programs back home
Program Officers
What do we do?

• **Program planning and management**
  o Maintain dynamic, high-quality merit proposal review process
  o Serve as ongoing advisor to applicants and grantees

• **Stewardship**
  o Upholds, interprets, communicates NSF policies
  o Serves as a technical expert on NSF policies to the scientific community
Program Officers
What do we do?

• **Organization Coordination and Liaison**
  - Provide leadership and direction to support the NSF mission
  - Communicate and coordinate within NSF and with other Federal science agencies

• **Diversity and Outreach**
  - Foster diversity in the review process and the award portfolio
  - Participate in outreach visits designed to broaden participation in NSF activities
Why seek out a Program Officer?

We are fountains of information
How to find us?

NSF Websites (nsf.gov)
Virtual Office Hours (access via Blogs)
Meetings and Conferences
When to engage with your program officer?

• **Before** you submit a proposal
  o Introduce yourself
    ✓ Your background
    ✓ Where you are now
  o Share a short description of your research
    ✓ One-pager
    ✓ What to include in the one-pager
      • See [MCB VOH from Feb 2020](#)
  o Seek input on best program fit
    ✓ Do some homework ahead of time
    ✓ Indicate which programs seem best to you
When to engage with your program officer?

• If your proposal is declined
  o Don’t give up!
  o Seek advice on what went wrong
    ✓ Too ambitious?
    ✓ Not enough preliminary data?
  o Ask about re-submission
    ✓ Same program? What timing?
    ✓ Is there a better program?
  o Seek input on how to revise
    ✓ What to emphasize?
    ✓ What to avoid?
When to engage with your program officer?

- If your proposal is awarded:
  - You can learn what to expect
    - Timeframe for funding
  - You can learn what to report: The 3 P’s
    - Progress (scientific and broader impacts)
    - Publications
    - Problems (unexpected turns and solutions)
  - Why stay in touch?
    - Hearing your success stories as they happen helps us convey the excitement of the science we fund
    - We can share new funding opportunities
NSF Needs You!
Become Part of Our Ecosystem

Program Officers
Division Directors
Ad hoc Reviewers
Advisory Panelists
Questions?

Karen Cone, kccone@nsf.gov