

# Smith Family Foundation: Odyssey Award

A Program of the Richard and Susan Smith Family Foundation

Pre- Application Informational Session

**Applications Due:**

Tuesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> at 12 PM ET

[SmithOdyssey@hria.org](mailto:SmithOdyssey@hria.org)

[www.hria.org/tmf/smithodyssey](http://www.hria.org/tmf/smithodyssey)



**HEALTH  
RESOURCES  
IN ACTION**

MEET OUR TEAM



# Who We Are



**Kristen Mueller, Ph.D.** (she/her)  
Chief Scientific Officer,  
Biomedical Research Grantmaking



**Britta Magnuson, D.M.D.** (she/her)  
Senior Scientific Advisor,  
Biomedical Research Grantmaking



**Tina Ta, M.S.** (she/her)  
Grants Officer,  
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**Lyndsey Medlin,** (she/her)  
Grants Coordinator,  
Biomedical Research Grantmaking

HRiA partners with individuals, organizations, and communities to transform the practices, policies, and systems that improve health and advance equity.



# Agenda

- Program Goals
- Eligibility
- Program Overview
- Review Criteria
- Proposal Writing Tips
- Example of Reviewer Feedback
- Q & A



Smith Odyssey was created to support:

“the pursuit of high impact ideas to generate breakthroughs and drive new directions in biomedical research.”



# Program Goals



## Short Term

Fuel creativity and innovation

Drive new research directions



## Long Term

Achieve biomedical breakthroughs

# Eligibility

## Applicant

- Applicant has less than \$750K per year in external funding
- Received first independent faculty (tenure-track assistant professor) appointment on or between November 1, 2016 and November 1, 2021
- Based at a nonprofit academic, medical, or research institution in MA or at Brown or Yale University

## Research

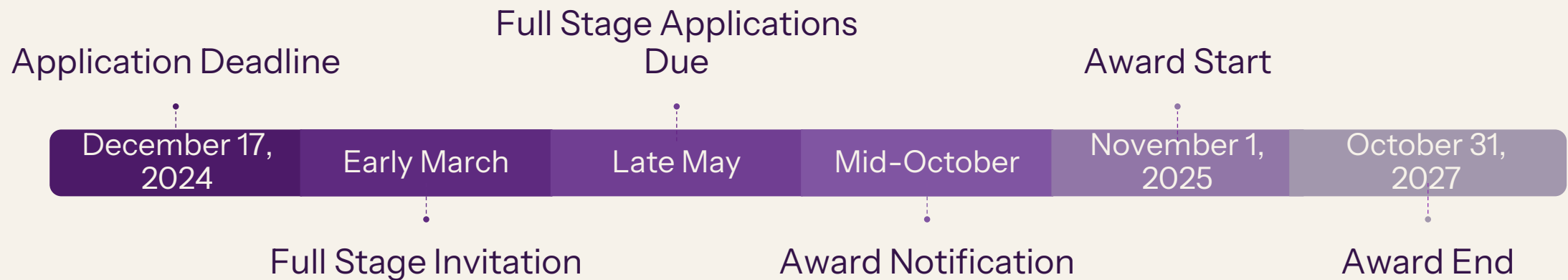
- Basic or translational biomedical research
- Clinical trials are beyond the scope of this program

Note: Researchers may only apply to the Odyssey Award no more than 2 times

# Program Overview

Award Duration: 2 years

Award Amount:  
(including 5% indirect costs) \$400,000





# Review Criteria



## APPLICANT

Fully capable of carrying out the proposed research

Institutional commitment



## IMPACT

Important problem  
Will advance biology  
Potential for medical breakthrough



## PROJECT

Clear question and rationale  
Appropriate and feasible design  
Makes sense in context of the field



## INNOVATION

Novel research line  
Distinct off-shoot of current research



# Proposal Writing Tips



Clear, concise,  
logical



Understandabl  
e language



Novelty



Distinct from  
ongoing work



Goals and  
metrics of  
success



Long-term  
goals

# Example Reviewer Feedback – Critiques

- “There is **no explanation** of how the proposed work is fundamentally different from the current **focus**. It is asserted that the work is different, but there is no real explanation, and it seems reasonably in line with the current focus of the lab.”
- “The proposal is not that innovative in that it basically proposes to simply to do this on a **larger scale** and with more automation.”
- “This is potentially **not as large of a departure** from current research as some other proposals.”
- “The PI has had **similar funding** to study this question.”
- “The research is **already a major component** of the PI's research program and the proposed studies do not seem to define a new area of research.”
- “The objectives of this proposal are also very **similar to those of many other research programs** in this field.”

# Example Reviewer Feedback - Critiques

- “The **methods** that will be used to study xxxxx are not clearly described.”
- “Proposal includes a **large quantity of unexplained acronyms and hyper-technical jargon** making it difficult to understand what exactly is being proposed in some areas.”
- “The core finding is so cool that the **vagueness of the Aims** are disappointing.”
- “**Relationship of the proposed work to the applicant’s current research** is not described clearly.”
- “The proposed studies are not clear enough to fully assess. Project is too vague and it is difficult to evaluate the **experiments** proposed.”
- “Even with limited space, the description is too vague to understand many of the **approaches** to be taken. As such, it is hard to know how impactful the work might be.”

# Example Reviewer Feedback - Critiques

- “Although the format used fits in the space guidelines provided, I think it is a stretch in the sense that the 'simple timeline' was used as a specific aims page.”
- “The description of the Aims relies too heavily on a reference list containing 22 citations. This format dampens enthusiasm because a framework for what will be done is not provided.”
- “Please make sure that any figures incorporated into a proposal are very clear for a reader, including a generalist. A well-crafted figure can convey 1000 words, but one that isn't well crafted can be confusing or just take up precious space.”

# Example Reviewer Feedback - Critiques

- **Research Focus:** “A weakness is proposing **two different screens in one proposal**. It would be stronger to propose one screen and demonstrate more ability to be able to characterize targets.”
- **Power:** “The investigator should, I think, be **more ambitious to obtain useful data**. At the scale proposed here, it is not clear that much of value will be achieved.”
- **Impact:** “While admittedly there is much still to learn in this area, it is not clear what **new insights** will be gained from these studies.”
- **Overstatement:** “I find the proposal OK, but not great, and in many cases a bit **overhyped**: “*My research will bring ----- to the forefront of the ----- field*” - The ----- field has already been focused on ----- for years.”

# Example of Reviewer Feedback - Strengths

- The **depth of the analysis and creativity is clear**, this one really stands out in regards to it helping build the PI's career.
- The **approach is unique**, the proposal is strong and multifaceted.
- The research proposal is clearly defined and comprises a straightforward plan. **The PI has assembled a team which is well qualified to help with the effort.**

# Questions?

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View the Office Hours Recording  
[HERE](#)

