ECR Hub
EDU Core Research

# Responding to Declination: Strategies for Revising a Declined Proposal

Roni Ellington, PhD, Professor, Morgan State University

Danielle Ferguson, EdD, Senior Researcher, American Institutes for Research

# Meet the Presenters

Roni Ellington, PhD

Presenter

roni.ellington@morgan.edu

Danielle Ferguson, EdD

Presenter

dferguson@air.org

# Agenda

- Overview of the ECR Hub
- A Personal Story about Declination
- Facts and figures about NSF funding rates
- Peer review process and evaluation criteria
- Common reasons for lower ratings/rankings
- What do I do now? Thinking through the resubmission process
- Q&A session

ECR Hub
EDU Core Research

# Overview of the ECR Hub

This presentation has been modified from a workshop to a standalone activity.

# ECR Funds Fundamental Research

- "***Fundamental research*** generates knowledge and understanding with the potential for broad relevance. The potential implications of ECR fundamental research for improving STEM education practice may be indirect and long-term rather than direct and immediate."
- ECR funds STEM education research in 3 areas
  - Research on STEM learning and learning environments
  - Research on Broadening Participation in STEM fields
  - Research on STEM workforce development
- "The ECR program seeks to create a **multidisciplinary portfolio** and to fund projects from investigators representing a **broad range of disciplinary backgrounds and approaches**, including those from fields more typically associated with other NSF directorates and offices. "

# Overarching Goals and Target Audiences for ECR Hub

## Two overarching goals:

- Extend the influence and reach of existing ECR investments
- Build career development opportunities, especially for underrepresented institutions and scholars

## Three target audiences:

- Current ECR grantees
- Prospective ECR grantees (Broadening Participation)
- Stakeholders in other NSF EDU programs (reached via other NSF EDU resource hubs)

# ECR Hub Goals

- **Identify the needs of a diverse ECR grantee community** through interviews and surveys of key stakeholders such as current and prospective ECR grantees.
- **Catalogue and synthesize past and current ECR research** through building interactive data tools and topic-specific evidence snapshots for finding specific kinds of ECR projects and learning about their results.
- **Strengthen research networks and information sharing for more than 400 current grantees** through organizing grantee meetings and workshops, creating a centralized website, and sharing information and engaging the community via social media.
- **Conduct outreach and broaden participation of prospective grantees** through proactive efforts to reach scholars and institutions underrepresented in the current ECR portfolio through targeted workshops, webinars, and communities of practice.
- **Consolidate and disseminate resources from existing ECR training institutes** by creating an efficient, one-stop, location on the ECR Hub website for users to access methodological training content (e.g., slides, videos, upcoming events).
- **Build collaborations with other NSF STEM education resource hubs** to advance long-term ECR program goals, such as realizing the potential of fundamental research to inform the next phases of more applied research.

# Oh no, I was declined!

A personal story about responding to declination.



# Self-Reflection: Oh no I was declined!

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Instructions**

- Think about the following questions:
  - What is your emotional reaction?
  - What is the essence of the comments?
  - How will you respond to each of the essential comments?
  - Who can provide external feedback?

# Peer Review Process

Reviewers and ECR POs evaluate all proposals against:

1. Components outlined in the ECR Solicitation
2. NSF's merit review criteria:
    1. Intellectual Merit: The potential to advance knowledge
    2. Broader Impacts: The potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes

# What do you think are some common reasons for proposals being declined?

# Common Reasons for Low Ratings/Rankings

**General reasons**

- Insufficient review of background literature/prior research
- Not enough detail on research plan
- Unfocused, project tries to do too much

**ECR-specific reasons**

- Proposes more R&D than basic research (common with tech-based projects)
- Fails to offer contributions to methods or theory
- Under-describes research design, methods, and/or analysis plans

# Review of Feedback:
# Oh no I was declined! What do I do now?

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Instructions**

- Review the feedback from a declined proposal.
  - Are there any common themes across the feedback?
  - What are the comments that you do not agree with?
  - Did you have any comments that matched our list of common reasons for declinations?

# How will you respond to the feedback?

- Identify 2 or 3 comments that you would like to respond to
- Create a chart to match your response to the feedback

| List of Comments (Feedback) | Response to the Feedback | NSF Criteria (e.g., broader impact) |
| --- | --- | --- |



# Developing an Action Plan

What are the next 2 or 3 steps that you will take to improve your proposal?

What is the timeline for completing these steps?

# Suggested Next Steps

Email the program officer whose name and email address are listed in the PO Comments to schedule a conversation

- If you don’t hear back from the program officer, please email ecr@nsf.gov

Prepare for meeting with program officer

- Prepare a list of questions you may have on the feedback
- Are there any reviewer comments that you don't understand or don't agree with?

# Suggested Next Steps

Prepare your resubmission

- Be sure to substantially revise your proposal or risk it being “returned without review” (RWR) if it is too similar to your previous submission.
- Use your best judgement choosing which reviewers’ comments and suggestions to prioritize in your revision.
- Enlist colleagues and advisory board members to read your proposal draft. Do a mini-review with people you know and trust to give you good feedback and revise accordingly.

If you decide not to resubmit,

- Volunteer to serve on a panel. Email ecr@nsf.gov your CV/web bio to express interest.

# Keep in mind…

Characteristics of Competitive ECR Proposals

- The work is important and potentially transformative
- A theoretical frame is presented that is appropriate and well-justified
- Important research questions are clearly stated and tied to theory
- Study population, data collection and methods are tied to the research questions
- Potential analyses are clearly described with sufficient detail for the type of analysis proposed (quantitative, qualitative)