

NSF CAREER Grant Award Readiness Assessment Tool

*Instructions:* Answer each question with a YES or NO answer. If you answer “YES” to most of these questions, you are likely ready to apply for an [**NSF CAREER award**](https://beta.nsf.gov/funding/opportunities/faculty-early-career-development-program-career). Your answers to this assessment can also help you identify areas of weakness.

If you have any questions regarding this assessment tool or NSF CAREER awards, **please contact** **researchdevelopment@tamucc.edu**.

# Basic Eligibility (NSF’s criteria)

* Do you hold a doctoral degree in a field supported by NSF by the cognizant Directorate's deadline for submission of CAREER proposals?
* Do you engage in research in an area of science [including some social sciences], engineering, or education supported by NSF?
* Are you employed in a tenure-track (or tenure-track-equivalent) position as an assistant professor (or equivalent title) as of October 1 after the proposal submission?
* Will you be untenured as of October 1 following the proposal submission?
* Have you not previously received a CAREER award (Prior or concurrent Federal support for other types of awards for non-duplicative research does not preclude eligibility)?

# Commitment to Research and Education

* Are you equally passionate about both your research and education roles?
* Are you willing to expend effort to integrate your research and education in a 5 to10 year plan?
* Are you interested in developing new educational activities, or expanding on things you have been doing?
* Do you have evidence (prior work) that demonstrates a commitment to education?

# Idea

* Are you passionate about your ideas and willing to devote strategic-level time and energy working to get it funded?
* Is your idea sufficiently distinct from that of your colleagues/mentor to enable you to establish an independent career?
* Do you know what other researchers are doing in your field and can you address how your work complements/differs from their work?
* Is your project in an innovative, vigorous, and high-impact area?
* Have you developed preliminary data that supports the feasibility of your idea?
* Do you have at least one publication relevant to the research you will propose?
* Do you have at least one synergistic activity relevant to the research you will propose?

# Fit

* Have you (or do you have time to in the next 1-2 months) researched the missions and strategic plans of NSF and specific programs to which you will submit your proposal?
* Does your project advance your NSF’s goals and align with their mission(s)?
* Are you ready to commit time to research what projects have already been funded by NSF?
* Do you know whether your project’s approach/methodology is distinct from previously funded projects?

# Positioning

* Will you be willing to contact the appropriate program officer(s) to discuss your idea and/or proposal?
* Have you discussed your idea with colleagues who have been successful in obtaining funding from the target sponsor or who have served on review panels?
* Does your proposal align with your department or college priorities?
* Have you considered serving as a proposal reviewer for NSF?

# Resources and Institutional Support

* Have you identified appropriate resources to help you develop a competitive proposal?
* Do you have the time and resources required to conduct the proposed project (e.g., infrastructure, equipment, facilities, start-up funds, consultants, environment, administrative support)?

# Principal Investigator Qualifications

* Are you up to date on the existing scholarship, literature, and best practices in your field?
* Do the quantity and quality of your preliminary data indicate that the proposed project is likely to be successful?
* Do you have at least one relevant publication?
* Have you attended and/or presented at national conferences within your field?
* Have you served on a grant review panel?
* Have you written a grant proposal?
* Have you received at least one grant?

# Colleagues and Connections

* Will you be able to contact PIs of funded projects to discuss CAREER strategies and to request copies of their funded proposals and reviewers' comments?
* Do you have connections to your former graduate advisor, postdoctoral advisor, or colleagues who could contribute technical expertise to your project?
* Will you be able to identify reviewers who would be able to review your proposal, particularly the scientific/technical aspects, prior to submission?

# Timing

* Are you ready to define a 5- and 10-year research and education plan?
* Is a CAREER proposal appropriate for this point in your career?
* Do you have enough time to write a proposal, collect the necessary preliminary data, and locate institutional information and have a full proposal draft by early June?
* Is your department supportive of your research/career plans, over the long term?

# Attitude

* Are you open to giving and receiving critical feedback on yours’ and others’ ideas and writing?
* Are you willing to work with colleagues who will skewer and disagree with your proposal?
* Are you willing to develop a relationship with the sponsor’s program officer(s)?
* Are you willing to view proposal rejection as a learning process and take reviewers' comments to heart?
* Are you open to asking your colleagues to read your reviewer comments and give you critical feedback if your proposal is rejected by the sponsor?
* Are you able and willing to devote sufficient time, over about 6 months, to develop and write a competitive proposal?
* Are you willing to commit to producing a nearly complete draft of your proposal early enough to allow at least 4 weeks for your colleagues to provide a critique?

# Gaps to Address

What gaps do you need to address to be ready to apply for an NSF CAREER award?