

Common Reasons K Grant Applications Get Criticized In Review

Based on experience with a wide range of review panels, here are the most common reasons that K proposals fail to receive more positive reviews. These are NOT listed in order of importance.

1. The candidate is weak – s/he does not have scientific promise or a strong enough publication record to date
2. The candidate's background is not well suited to the proposed direction of the K
3. The career development plan is too ambitious
4. The career development plan is not ambitious enough – it is too narrow
5. The career development plan does not follow a logical sequence throughout the period of the project – there is a lack of a clear scientific path to success.
6. The career development plan does not meld well with the research plan
7. The career development plan does not take advantage of the resources in the proposed setting and environment
8. The mentors are weak (or there are no mentors that cover an important area).
9. The commitment of the mentors to the candidate is weak
10. The environment is not conducive to the candidate acquiring the skills s/he hopes to acquire

For the Research Plan:

11. The project attempts to do too much – it is too ambitious
12. A case for innovation needs to be stronger – the project is too mundane
13. The problem being addressed is not an important one
14. The target population is not high risk
15. The research team lacks experience in the topic area
16. The publication record of the research team is weak
17. For an R01, there is no pilot data to indicate the intervention is likely to be effective
18. A better case needs to be made for feasibility of the research
19. The sampling strategy is weak – the sample will be biased and generalizability of results is limited

20. For longitudinal studies, there is not convincing evidence that the team will have low attrition rates nor are there tests for attrition bias
21. The intervention is impractical and not realistic in real life settings
22. The psychometric properties of the measures are not well documented
23. The sample is not well justified in terms of being high risk
24. The sample size is too small - there is not sufficient power
25. The statistical analyses are not appropriate – no mention is made of issues like missing data, assumption violations, model misspecification, outliers, familywise corrections for multiple contrasts, etc.
26. For qualitative research, the section on data analysis is underdeveloped