

CAREER Concept Paper Outline and Practical Tips

Outline for One-Page Concept Paper

*Suggest you do not use headings in a one-pager but **bold** key words (goal, vision, gap) for readability*

- Provide storyline rationale (1/3 to 1/2 page)
 - What is the research problem?
 - What has been done already to address this problem (current state of the art targeted at this problem)?
 - What is the research gap that remains?
 - Follow up with “so what?” statement. What are the implications of this gap that make it worth addressing?
 - How do you propose to address this gap?
 - This is a concise summary statement that will be elaborated on in your goals and methodology
- State research vision and goal(s) and educational gap
 - State your five-year CAREER goal
 - State the education gap related to your research area and your education goal
 - State career vision and how this proposed effort will accelerate such a trajectory
 - Briefly summarize/point to “why you?”
 - Clarify concisely what you have already done, what will be delivered at the end of five years, and what you will be enabled to do post CAREER
- Describe research methodology (~1/3 page)
- Describe impact of your successful research and integrated education plan (~1/4 page)

CAREER Concept Paper and Program Officer Meeting Top Tips

1. **One page** only. In the words of an NSF program officer: “We want to review your idea, not your proposal.” This is your elevator pitch. Write to the big picture but be prepared to ask targeted questions of your program officer.
2. Follow same font requirement as the full proposal and do not minimize font size or margins.
3. Avoid technical jargon and write to make your science understandable to a broader set of reviewers/program officers.
4. Be prepared to talk with your program officer about your ideas for an education plan targeting the educational gap you identified, but **do not go into detail and summarize an educational plan** in the one pager. The concept paper should focus on your technical idea. Your educational ideas can be further built/refined as needed once your research rationale is vetted. You want to point to just enough of the educational integration so that program officers know you understand the CAREER requirement for educational leadership and novelty.
5. It is usually not strategic to include a technical diagram on a one-page concept paper, so be careful how you are using your valuable space. If you include one, have mentors read your concept paper to verify it is helpful.
6. It is preferable to have an in person meeting with your program officer or at least talk on the phone as opposed to an email response. Request a conversation as a start and provide your availability so you make it as easy as possible for the program officer to respond.
7. Because this is an early career funding program, send your NSF biosketch with your one pager.
8. Program officers become inundated with CAREER-related requests as soon as the spring semester ends. You will be more likely to get a response the earlier you contact them.
9. Be prepared to ask strategic questions in your program officer meeting re: proposal scope and ideas for novel educational initiatives, but **let your program officer do the majority of the talking**. Do not ask questions that could have been answered by reading the solicitation.