

## Early-Career Research Fellowship (ECRF)

### Energy Track: Office Hours - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ document compiles general questions discussed during the Early-Career Research Fellowship – Energy Track Office Hours for the 2026 application cycle. It is intended to support prospective applicants who were unable to attend and to provide additional clarity on the application process, eligibility, and proposal expectations.

#### **Key Application Resources**

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review the following materials, which provide important guidance on how applications are evaluated and the expectations of the fellowship:

- Energy Track [Review Criteria](#) (found under Selection Criteria on the ECRF Track website)
- [Terms of Agreement](#) (found under Selection Criteria on the ECRF Track website)
- For any additional questions, please contact: [GulfFellowships@nas.edu](mailto:GulfFellowships@nas.edu)

#### **General & Administrative Questions**

##### **What is the application deadline?**

The deadline is: May 5, 2026 at 5:00 PM Eastern Time. Please ensure your application is fully submitted by that time.

##### **Do we need to submit a budget or budget justification?**

No. A detailed budget justification is not required at the time of application. Submission of a budget is optional for this fellowship. We provide the option to upload a budget because some institutions require it as part of their internal policies. However, please note that reviewers will not assess the budget, and it is not part of the review criteria.

We recommend that all applicants consult their institution's policies regarding proposal submissions to ensure they are meeting any internal requirements. If your institution requires a budget, you are welcome to include one with your application.

##### **Should the application be submitted through our institution?**

No. Applications are submitted directly by the applicant through the online portal. Institutional involvement is not required at the time of submission but will be required if selected for the award.

All applicants will be asked to provide Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) information. This information will be used if an applicant is selected as a fellow and moves forward to the agreement stage.

**Can applicants apply to multiple tracks in the same year?**

Yes. Applicants may apply to multiple tracks within the same application cycle. However, any resubmitted applications must include significant revisions. While there is no restriction on the number of tracks you can apply to, we strongly encourage applicants to select the track that best aligns with their research and focus their efforts on submitting the strongest possible application.

**How often is this fellowship offered?**

The fellowship is offered annually. Applicants should refer to the program website for the most up-to-date information on future competitions.

**Eligibility & Scope Questions**

**Do applicants need to be located in the Gulf region?**

No. Applicants are not required to be physically located in the Gulf region. However, proposed research must clearly align with the program’s geographic focus and demonstrate relevance to the Gulf region.

**Does the research need to already be established in the Gulf region?**

Applicants may propose planned or future work in the Gulf region with clear evidence of connection to the region. Early career researchers should demonstrate clear intent, relevance, and potential impact to the region and track goal.

**Is there a preference for projects that address the entire Gulf region versus a specific state?**

Projects may focus broadly or on specific states. The key consideration is alignment with program goals and potential for meaningful impact.

**Do discussions or emerging collaborations in the Gulf region count toward relevance?**

Yes. Early-stage engagement and planned collaborations can help establish relevance.

**Are social science proposals encouraged?**

We accept applications from a wide range of scientific disciplines, including the social and behavioral sciences, as outlined in the eligibility criteria. Applicants may hold doctoral degrees in fields spanning the engineering and physical sciences, earth and life sciences, social and behavioral sciences, health sciences and medicine, or other relevant interdisciplinary areas. We encourage submissions from all disciplines; the key consideration is whether the proposed research is clearly aligned with the Energy Track goals and priorities, regardless of disciplinary background.

**Mentorship Questions**

**Who makes a strong mentor for this fellowship?**

A strong mentor is someone who is well positioned to provide meaningful guidance on your professional development, research direction, and overall career progression. This may

include advice on topics such as work/life balance, time and project management, teaching and mentorship, professional service, community engagement, and research or lab management. The most important consideration is that the mentor can offer relevant, thoughtful support to help you grow as an early-career researcher.

**What should the mentor statement include?**

The mentor statement should clearly describe the mentor’s commitment to supporting the applicant and how they will contribute to the applicant’s career and project development. Applicants should review the program’s review criteria, particularly how the mentorship component is evaluated. It is important that the mentor statement aligns with the applicant’s responses to mentorship-related questions, reflecting a shared understanding of expectations and goals. Applicants are encouraged to have these discussions with their mentor in advance to ensure consistency and clarity across the application.

**Does the mentor need to be in the same research area?**

No. The mentor does not need to be in the same research area as the applicant. The key consideration is that the mentor is well positioned to provide meaningful, holistic mentorship that supports the applicant’s overall professional development. This may include guidance on career progression, research strategy, time and project management, teaching and mentorship, professional service, community engagement, and research or lab management. Applicants should ensure that the mentor’s expertise and approach align with their development needs and are clearly reflected in both the mentor statement and the applicant’s responses.

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*This document reflects primarily general questions relevant to all applicants; inquiries specific to individual circumstances were referred to [gulffellowships@nas.edu](mailto:gulffellowships@nas.edu) for follow-up.*