

Gulf Research Program Early-Career Research Fellowship

Community Track

Application Questions and Review Criteria – Award Year 2026

This document provides an overview of the application questions and their associated review criteria for this application cycle. We highly encourage our applicants to thoroughly examine both the application questions and the respective review criteria while formulating their responses.

Community Track Focus: Climate Risk, Health & Decision Making

Community Track Goal: This track invites applied research that identifies how climate-related stressors (e.g., heat, flooding, pollution) affect human health, community resilience, and regional economies. Based on stakeholder/community demand and consultation, fellows should collect and analyze data, create tools, models, or communication approaches that connect climate science to local decision-making and public health interventions.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Relevance Essay (1000-word limit)

Using language for a lay audience, explain how your research has contributed to and will contribute to the Community Track Goal (Total 1000-word limit).*

In your response, include:

- Key characteristics of the populations and/or communities you currently work with or plan to work with, that are relevant to understanding the health, social, or economic impacts of climate-related stressors.
- Describe how your research contributes and/or will contribute to a better understanding of climate-related stressors (e.g., heat, flooding, pollution) on human health, community resilience, and regional economies.
- Describe how you use and/or will use new data, tools, models, or communication approaches to connect climate science to local decision-making and public health interventions.

2. Research Essay (2 parts, total 2000-word limit)

The Gulf Research Program Early-Career Research Fellowship funds people, not projects. Therefore, your research portfolio statement should include information about your research portfolio as a whole, not a specific project. We encourage you to write your research portfolio statement in a way that is understandable to a scientifically literate lay reader and to make the best use of the space provided by utilizing the entire word count, rather than uploading images, diagrams, or figures. The use of references should be minimal and only when absolutely needed. If references are included, they will be counted toward the total word count, and we do not have a preference as to citation style.

- a. A description of your relevant research and projects to date.
- b. A description of future work and the research goals you hope to accomplish in the next two years.

3. Special Skill Essay (2 parts, total 600-word limit)

Addressing the health, social, and economic impacts of climate-related stressors such as heat, flooding, and pollution requires collaboration across disciplines and sectors, as well as research approaches that are grounded in real-world contexts and responsive to stakeholder needs. (600-word limit)

- a. Describe your experience, including challenges and successes, incorporating non-extractive research methods and multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary approaches in research or applied efforts that engage stakeholders (e.g., community members, practitioners, planners, or public officials) to inform analysis, planning, or communication related to climate-related stressors and their health, social, or economic impacts.
- b. Describe lessons learned from both challenges and successes and how you would apply these lessons in your future research efforts.

4. Personal Growth and Mentoring Essay (3 parts, total 1250-word limit)

- a. How will the mentoring provided by the fellowship help you to address your career goals and challenges? What is your strategy to be a productive mentee? (400-word limit)
- b. How will you know when you have achieved professional success in your career? What skills or characteristics do you need to work on in order to achieve this success? (350-word limit)
- c. How have your lived experiences, educational journey, and/or understanding of the world shaped your identity as a scientist and an early-career researcher? If applicable, we invite you to share your lived experiences of overcoming barriers in your academic journey, along with the strategies you employed to overcome these challenges. (500-word limit)

5. Submission of 5-page CV and Mentor Essay

REVIEW CRITERIA

The Early-Career Research Fellowship application review for the Community track will be conducted in two stages. Applications will first go through an eligibility review conducted by Gulf Research Program staff. Applications that are eligible will proceed to the second review stage focused on relevance, merit, and impact and will be reviewed by at least three peer reviewers during this stage.

Eligibility Review

- Is the applicant a current federal employee?
- Is the applicant affiliated with a non-federal U.S. institution that has a valid tax ID number?
- Did the applicant complete their eligible degree (PhD, ScD, EngD, MD, DrPH, EdD, DSW or DVM) on or after January 1st, 2016?
- Does the applicant appear to currently hold a permanent and fully independent position as an investigation, faculty member, clinician scientist, or scientific team lead in industry or academia? (A postdoc is not considered a fully independent position.)

Relevance, Merit, and Impact Review

Relevance (30%):

- Applicant's relevance essay demonstrates how their prior and future work will contribute to the track goal.

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Technical Merit of Current Work (25%):

- Applicant demonstrates:
 - strong technical merit and research skills in past work.
 - potential to make a unique or significant contribution to the field of study and/or towards the goal of the track.
 - ability to secure funding through research grants/contracts
- The quality, range, and quantity of publications is appropriate for the applicant's discipline and career stage.

Potential for Impact, Personal Growth and Resilience (15%):

- Applicant demonstrates:
 - a sense of self as a learner and problem-solver, building on prior experiences to respond to new and challenging contexts.
 - initiative within their institution and their field.
 - evidence of pursuing or generating opportunities to expand knowledge, skills, and abilities; self-reflection over past successes and failures; and awareness of their own strengths and weaknesses.

Communication Skills (10%):

- Applicant communicates complex ideas well in written formats, application materials are well-organized and cogent, and writing is free of grammatical and syntax errors.
- Application materials convey an understanding of context, audience, and purpose; materials are responsive to the questions asked.

Special Skill (15%):

- Applicant demonstrates a/an:
 - understanding of challenges associated with incorporating multi-, inter-, and/or trans-disciplinary approaches in applied research and a history of successfully doing so.
 - history of successfully working with diverse stakeholders.
 - history of employing cocreation and non-extractive research methods to engage stakeholders in understanding or responding to health, social, or economic impacts associated with climate-related stressors, including an understanding of common challenges and strategies used to address them.

Mentorship (5%):

- Mentor and applicant have shared goals and understanding of applicant's strengths and identified areas for growth.
- Mentoring plan is realistic and feasible; objectives for mentoring relationship are specific and achievable.
- Mentoring plan is holistic and goes beyond the requirements of tenure and promotion.