

Early-Career Research Fellowship (ECRF) – Community Track: Office Hour - Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

This FAQ document compiles general questions discussed during the Early-Career Research Fellowship – Community 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 and the overall fellowship experience.

General & Administrative Questions

- **Will we have access to the slides or a recording of the meeting afterward?**

Yes. The presentation slides and a compiled Q&A summary will be posted on the program website. If you have additional questions, please email GulfFellowships@nas.edu.

- **What is the application deadline?**

The deadline is: March 25, 2026 at 5:00 PM Eastern Time
Please ensure your application is fully submitted by that time.

- **Should the application be submitted via our institution with an AOR signature?**

No. Applications are submitted directly by the applicant through the [online portal](#). An Authorized Organizational Representative (AOR) signature is not required at the time of application. If selected, institutional documentation will be required prior to award. Detailed information can be found in the Early-Career Research Fellowship sample grant agreement [here](#) (under Award Details).

- **Is there a requirement regarding indirect costs (IDC/F&A)?**

Indirect costs are **not allowed** for this fellowship. Detailed information can be found in the Early-Career Research Fellowship sample grant agreement [here](#) (under Award Details).

- **Is there flexibility in the fellowship budget?**

Yes. The funds may be allocated across allowable project-related expenses (e.g., personnel support, trainee support, travel, community engagement costs, supplies). However, all costs must be justified and directly related to the proposed

project. Detailed information about allowable use of funds can be found in the Early-Career Research Fellowship sample grant agreement [here](#) (under Award Details).

- **If my university had an awardee last year, does that affect applicants from the same institution this year?**

No. There is no limit on the number of applicants from a single institution, and prior awards to your institution do not negatively affect eligibility.

- **If I move institutions before or during the fellowship, can I take the fellowship with me?**

Fellowships are awarded to the individual fellow but administered through the institution. Institutional changes before or during the award period may be possible but require prior approval and must meet eligibility requirements at the new institution.

Eligibility Questions

- **Does the institution need to be located in the U.S. Gulf region?**

No. The applicant's institution does not need to be located in the Gulf region. However, the proposed research must clearly align with the goals and geographic focus outlined in the RFA.

- **Does the research need to be conducted in a Gulf state?**

The research should clearly connect to the U.S. Gulf region, the program's priorities, and track goal. Projects conducted outside the U.S. Gulf region may be eligible if they have clear relevance, applicability, and benefit to Gulf communities.

- **Is the fellowship intended to support a new research direction or accelerate existing research?**

Either approach is acceptable. In either case, the proposal should demonstrate clear alignment with the program's goals and strong potential for meaningful impact within the Gulf region. We encourage applicants to review the track description, application prompts, and review criteria closely when preparing their materials to ensure responsiveness and competitiveness.

Mentorship Questions

- **Does the mentor need to be in the same department or institution?**

The mentor does not need to be in the same department or institution as the applicant. The key consideration is that the mentor is well positioned to provide meaningful guidance and advice on professional development and career topics such as work/life balance, time and project management, teaching and mentorship, committee and other professional service, community engagement and outreach, lab and research management.

If you are unable to identify a mentor within your affiliated organization and select an external mentor, the mentor honorarium will be waived. In that case, you will be asked to respond to an additional application question explaining and justifying your selection of an external mentor.

- **Does the mentor need to be a member of NASEM?**

No.

- **Can I have more than one mentor?**

The application requires applicants to identify one primary mentor and to include a single mentor statement from that individual. Reviewers will evaluate the mentorship component based on the information provided for that named mentor.

While applicants may have additional informal mentors or advisors, only one mentor may be formally designated in the application materials.

- **Can the mentor be in a different research area?**

Yes. A mentor may provide career guidance and professional development support, even if not directly aligned with the specific research topic.

Additional Questions:

- **Can funding be used for a postdoctoral stipend?**

Support for postdoctoral stipend is allowable if well justified and aligned with the project's goals. Detailed information on allowable funds can be found in the Early-Career Research Fellowship sample grant agreement [here](#) (under Award Details).

- **Do we need letters of support from collaborators or community organizations?**

Letters of support from collaborators or community organizations are not required. Applicants should follow the instructions and requirements outlined in the application portal. Please note that we do not accept supplementary materials beyond what is explicitly requested in the application.

- **Do we need recommendation letters from stakeholders at this stage?**

No additional recommendation letters are required beyond what is specified in the application guidelines.

- **Do we need to name specific communities we will work with?**

You should clearly describe the community or communities of focus and provide a strong rationale for their selection. We encourage applicants to review the track description, application prompts, and review criteria closely when preparing their materials to ensure responsiveness and competitiveness.

This document reflects primarily general questions relevant to all applicants; inquiries specific to individual circumstances were referred to gulffellowships@nas.edu for follow-up. For any additional questions, please contact: GulfFellowships@nas.edu