NATIONAL ACADEMIES    Sciences
                      Engineering
                      Medicine

GULF RESEARCH PROGRAM

# Gulf Research Program Early-Career Research Fellowship

## Environment Track
## Review Criteria – Award Year 2026

The Early-Career Research Fellowship application review for the Environment 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.

**Environment Track Focus:** Ecosystem Health - Monitoring and Managing for Environmental Change

**Environment Goal:** This track invites research that leverages innovative scientific or technological approaches to assess, monitor, or predict the resilience of critical ecosystems and species to changing conditions. Fellows should develop or test innovative monitoring techniques and/or develop solutions that enhance a system's biodiversity or slow its loss. This work should translate into actionable management and policy strategies that sustain ecosystem services and strengthen community resilience. Special emphasis will be placed on applicants that utilize genetic, genomic, machine learning, or AI methodologies in their work.

## 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.

*2026 ECRF Environment track invites research that leverages innovative scientific or technological approaches to assess, monitor, or predict the resilience of critical ecosystems and species to changing conditions. Fellows should develop or test innovative monitoring techniques and/or develop solutions that enhance a system's biodiversity or slow its loss. This work should translate into actionable management and policy strategies that sustain ecosystem services and strengthen community resilience. Special emphasis will be placed on applicants that utilize genetic, genomic, machine learning, or AI methodologies in their work.*

## 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 experience:
  - and skills in collaboration across scientific disciplines.
  - and skills in engagement with stakeholders and end-users of scientific information.
  - utilizing science communication and an understanding on how to use science communication when disseminating their research to broader audience.
- Applicant has incorporated principles of impartiality, fairness, and equal opportunity in their research work.

## 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.