Health Science Administration at NIH

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Reasons for Making the Switch

• Geographic immobility
• Research not as fulfilling as it seemed
• Want time for something else
  – Family, community, arts
• Preference for occupation with more immediate rewards
• Can’t afford to move back to academia
Luci’s story

• Found academic job quickly (< 1 year of looking)
• Salary offer was lower than current NIH salary
• Public schools not as good (almost anywhere in US)
• Spouse’s career would sacrifice
• Moving would be costly
• Politics crept in during the job negotiations

***For me, research was a fun intellectual pursuit, but not a passion. I was open to the possibility of other options that seemed like a better fit for my family
NIH Peer Review

• Health Scientist Administrator (GS 13/14)
  – Scientific Review Officer
  – **Minimum** five-years postdoctoral experience
  – Demonstrated record of grantsmanship
    (K-award or other independent funding)
  – Administrative experience within intramural helpful, such as serving on IRB, IACUC, trans-NIH committees
  – Outside activities such of appointments to committees of professional societies, graduate faculty appointments, journal editorial boards
    • Demonstrates presence/acceptance in the scientific community;
    • Demonstrates ability to multi-task
    • Will serve as a source of contacts in administrative life
NIH Peer Review

• Primary responsibilities:
  – Locate qualified reviewers to review 80 – 100 NIH grant applications per review cycles; 3 times/year
  – Manage conflicts of interest
    [extensive training in first year]
  – Serve as the designated federal official for study section
    • (Federal Advisory Committee Act)
  – Oversee production of summary statement
    • Official report of the study section to the National Advisory Council/Board on the review of each application
  – Ensure that each review is defensible
NIH Peer Review

• Extracurricular Activities
  – Training of new staff members
  – Training committees
  – Best practices committees (within IC or trans-NIH)
    (helps to develop recommendations or best practices for managing new NIH policies or programs)
  – Trans-NIH committees
    • STEP committee
      (develops training programs for all extramural staff)
    • Review Users’ Group
      (develops requirements for new IT developments)
    • Review Point-person
      (serves as an expert resource on review for specific types of grants programs)
# IC vs CSR Review Positions

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<tr>
<th>Programs Reviewed</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CSR</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Centers (P01, P20) Common Fund programs, Some Training / Career Development (F, K, T), Most RFAs</td>
<td>Research Project Grants (R01, R03), Some Training /Career Dev., Some RFAs</td>
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<th>Work Environment</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CSR</th>
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<tr>
<td>Less centralized, More exposure to program staff, More opportunity for extracurricular activities, Fewer training resources</td>
<td>Highly centralized, Elaborate corporate structure, Much separation from IC influences</td>
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<th>Opportunities for Advancement</th>
<th>IC</th>
<th>CSR</th>
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<td>Many opportunities to detail/or interact with other offices IC within the IC</td>
<td>More opportunities to advance in Review, fewer opportunities to experiment with other roles</td>
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NIH Planning and Evaluation

• Health Scientist Administrator or Health Science Policy Analyst (GS 13/14/15)
  – Planning and Evaluation Officer
  – HSAs tends to have advanced degrees in biomedical science
  – HS Policy Analysts often come through a policy fellowship such as AAAS or PMF with a MPA, JD, MS or a Ph.D in a non-biomedical field and little to no postdoctoral experience
  – Administrative experience in highly visible science administration settings –
    – details or internships in other federal agencies that have a less vertical organizational structure, such as NSF, OSTP, NIST, or DOE, will offer exposure to high ranking science officers at entry level
NIH Planning and Evaluation

• Primary Responsibilities
  – Preparing Congressional Justification
    (Budget testimony for the yearly appropriations process)
  – Tracking performance of key scientific and administrative initiatives
  – Preparing communication in response to inquiries from Congress, HHS, OMB, advocacy groups and other public stakeholders
  – Coordinating yearly reporting as mandated by legislation, i.e.,
    • Biennial Report and NIH Categorization, Inclusion reporting
    • Supervise small staff of program and/or policy analysts
    • May also manage communications staff and/or IC web page administrators
NIH Planning and Evaluation

• Extracurricular Activities
  – Very little “doesn’t count” as a primary responsibility
  – Typically involves fed-wide activity with other agencies around some new Congressional mandate or Executive order (like the Recovery Act, Stem Cell Policy)
  – P&E Officers tend to bear a very heavy workload, and are expected to help manage crises with a short turnaround
    • such as highly public incidents of scientific misconduct, acts of terrorism, natural disasters, political hullabaloo
  – Need to have strong communication and diplomacy skills
  – Current “Transparency Movement” values strong data analysis skills, ability to perform requirements analysis and oversee the development of data systems
### Comparing three types of Administrative Careers at NIH

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<tr>
<th>Predictability</th>
<th>Review</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Planning &amp; Evaluation</th>
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<tr>
<td>High - work is cyclic and highly regimented, most “surprises” are preventable by thorough preparation, but when emergencies happen the stakes are high</td>
<td>Medium – POs who manage grants must respond to external contingencies, can be unpredictable. Ex. grantee makes a very controversial discovery, or accused of misconduct</td>
<td>Low - P&amp;E officers are often tasked with projects that are externally driven, and inherit new ones with little warning and short deadlines. (“Friday Fire Drill”)</td>
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<td>Latitude to Work Independently</td>
<td>Very High – SROs’ most important contacts are reviewers (outside NIH), telework is a big perk</td>
<td>Medium – Certain amount of teamwork with NIH colleagues is obligatory</td>
<td>Low – Much time is spent on working in trans-NIH committees, interacting with other federal offices and supervising analysts and contractors</td>
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<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Low – because uniform processes are required, little deviation from best practices is possible, although innovations that improve efficiency are rewarded</td>
<td>High – work is very flexible, POs tend to have diverse choices about how to carry out their duties, but this comes at a cost. There is little automation of duties, POs seldom agree on best practices</td>
<td>High – P&amp;E officers are charged with finding the best ways to detect, describe, communicate complex research results and performance data to the public, including Congress</td>
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<td>Possibilities for Advancement</td>
<td>Limited - SROs who are promoted to supervisors typically stay in review, 5 – 6 years in review is invaluable and unique experience</td>
<td>High - POs have wider selection of opportunities for advancement within and outside</td>
<td>High – P&amp;E officers are highly visible and exposed to many networking opportunities</td>
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