Careers in Grants Management

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Typical Activities for a National Program Leader (NPL) at the National Institute of Food & Agriculture (NIFA)

- Program Development, including solicitation and analysis of stakeholder input.
- Competitive proposal review from submission to decision notification
- Non-competitive proposal review
- Post-award management
- Communication of project impacts
- Committee and staff meetings
- Email correspondence
Paths Leading to a Career as a NIFA NPL

• Typical path
  – University faculty member in discipline relevant to agricultural sciences or industry scientist
  – Experience with grants management as panel reviewer or Panel Manger leads to interest in grants management

• My alternative path
  – Postdoctoral fellow
  – Stay-at-home mom (1 year)
  – Accepted a Grants Specialist position (GS 12)
  – Promoted to National Program Leader (over the course of several years)
Job Search Resources:

- Networking
- USA Jobs  https://www.usajobs.gov

Job Skills and Expertise:

- Ability to work in teams
- Communication skills
- Relevant expertise, including scientific expertise
- Organizational skills
- Demonstrated leadership skills
Program Leader vs. Postdoc:

- Postdocs learn a narrow subject in depth; program leaders need a broad understanding that is not as deep
- Program leaders network very broadly; Postdocs often have more focused networks
- Program leaders often must respond to requests on short notice. Timelines tend to be longer for postdocs.
- Both program leaders and postdocs have career flexibility.