Breakout 1. Lessons learned from the mock panel review process

• How does the mock panel experience compare to an actual CAREER panel?
  – NSF has strong COI rules for panelists, and we ignored these for this demonstration
  – It is important to anticipate a broader scope of expertise on CAREER reviews (compared with unsolicited proposals)

• Program fit is critical; review the program description and past awards; use your project summary to communicate with the program director

• Best to use email and your project summary to arrange a phone appointment first with the cognizant PD
Breakout 1. Lessons learned from the mock panel review process: Discussion questions

• What surprised you about the review process? What conclusions can you draw from this insight?
• What do you think distinguished the successful proposals from the unsuccessful proposals?
• What do you think are the key features of a well-written proposal?
• When you reviewed the proposal, with what aspects did you struggle with?
Breakout 2. Writing an effective Project Summary

- This session will focus on how to write strong and effective statements of *Intellectual Merit and Broader Impacts*

- What are the purposes of the project summary?
  - PDs use it to help determine program fit and type of reviewers needed
  - Reviewers use it to find out what are the key objectives of the proposal
  - It may form the first impression among reviewers
Breakout 2. Writing an effective Project Summary

• Which mock proposal had the best project summary? What made it so good?
• For a given summary, can you define in one sentence what the PI is going to do? If so, note that statement.
• How well does the intellectual merit (IM) statement address the IM criteria?
• How well does the broader impacts (BI) statement address the BI criteria?
• Did the PI indicate a strategy to integrate research and education?
Breakout 3. Starting off the Project Description off right

- This session will focus the participants’ attention on the first two to three pages of the project description.
- The beginning of the proposal captures the reviewers’ interest
  - Were the reviewers excited by the topic?
  - Is there a clear motivation for the research?
  - Is it clear what problem this proposal is solving?
  - It is clear what the PI will do?
- Which mock proposal captured your attention best by its first two or three pages? Why?
Breakout 3. Starting off the Project Description off right

Read the first 2-3 pages of the example(s):

• What components of the proposal are presented on the first few pages? Should they be on the first few pages?
• How could the first few pages of this project description be improved?
• What were you looking for as a reviewer to help you understand the project? Did you find it in the example?
• Did the first few pages give you a good idea of the research and educational activities that will be performed?
• How could the first few pages be improved?
Breakout 4. Developing a strong research plan

• This session will focus on the key characteristics of a strong research plan
• We’ll use the 4 mock proposals
Breakout 4. Developing a strong research plan

- What were the research objectives?
- Does the research plan provide a sound path toward achieving the research objective?
- Does the research plan have sufficient details to convince you that it can be done?
- Does the PI have the expertise and background to conduct this work?
- Does the PI have adequate access to resources?
- Did the PI provide contingency plans for the higher risk themes of the project?
- Is the project scope appropriate to the budget and a 5-year time length
Breakout 5. Synthesizing: Strategies and career plan

• This session will discuss strategies to prepare a compelling CAREER proposal
• Remember, a CAREER proposal is not a 5-year unsolicited proposal
Breakout 5. Synthesizing: Strategies and career plan

- Which proposal had the strongest career plan? Why?
- Does the 5-year CAREER proposal communicate the PI’s long-term goals in education and research?
- What did you think of the integration of education and research in the mock proposals? Which one(s) was a strong example?
Breakout 5. Synthesizing: Common Questions to PDs

• When is the best time to submit CAREER proposals? Should I submit during my first year as assistant professor? Should I wait till my third year?

• Can I include collaborators or a senior participant in my CAREER proposal?
Breakout 5. Synthesizing: Declined? Next Steps…

• How do I interpret the panel summary and reviews for a declined proposal?
• How do I get feedback from an NSF PD?
• How do I get real panel experience?