Evaluation Criteria for Research Statement

Past Research– Scientific field and research questions within the field: Why is the scientific area/field studied important? What specific questions did the candidate set out to address? Are the questions fundamental to the field or incremental? Are the questions relevant to the larger scientific community?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Field Definition	Clearly defines the field and articulates its importance to basic and/or applied understanding of biology.	Field definition and its importance is at times vague.	Vague	Not addressed
Research questions	Clearly articulates the question(s) they sought to answer and explains their fundamental importance to the field	Questions studied are justified as fundamental but at times poorly expressed or unconvincing	Justification for questions studied is vague	Not addressed

Candidate's contributions: How did the candidate contribute to the project (main driver, collaborator)? What challenges did the candidate face during the project? How did the candidate overcome these challenges?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Contributions	Main intellectual and technical driver of the project	Significant intellectual or experimental contributions	Minor intellectual or experimental contributions	Not addressed
Challenges	Challenging project. Candidate was instrumental in overcoming project-related challenges.	Project somewhat challenging	Project not very challenging	Not addressed

Scientific advancements: What were the major findings resulting from the candidates work? How did these findings help advance the field? How did these findings impact related fields or the broader scientific community? What new questions arise from the candidate's work?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Findings significance	Clearly articulates research findings and their significance.	Findings and/or their significance are, at times vague	Findings are vague and/ or not clearly related research questions	Not described

Future Plans – Significance of the scientific problem: Which specific questions does the candidate seek to answer? If the hypothesis is tested, do we care about the answer? Are the questions fundamental to the field or incremental? Are the questions relevant to the larger scientific community?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Importance of problem	Clearly articulates the importance of the larger problem. Seeks a biological insight and/or technological advance that has broad significance to the scientific community.	Describes an important problem and offers convincing justification.	Either describes an insignificant problem or only vaguely justifies the problem's significance.	Not addressed
Potential to advance field	Clearly articulates research questions and why they are fundamental to the field. Questions are deep and challenging to answer.	Fundamental to the field	Incremental to the field	Not addressed

Focus and approach: What will the candidate do to answer their questions? Is the plan logical? Will the results address the hypothesis? If the approach succeeds, will it result in understanding of a biological problem at the molecular level?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Clear and appropriate	All experiments are logical and clearly described. Completion will provide an insightful perspective on the problem. Candidate makes clear case that they are exceptionally positioned for the work	Most experiments are logically related to the scientific question and are clearly described at an appropriate level of detail.	Some experiments are logical while others are tangential or irrelevant. Some important details are missing or unclear.	Unclear and/or illogical
Mechanistic	Seeks a complete and quantitative understanding at the molecular level	Central focus on molecules and mechanisms	Somewhat mechanistic. May identify molecular players but only superficially interrogate their roles.	Not molecular

Innovation and scope: Is the perspective pioneering? Are new methods used or proposed? Are the aims well balanced between short-term/feasible and longer term/ambitious?

	3 (Exceptional)	2 (Solid)	1 (Weak)	0
Innovation	Highly novel concepts and/or methodologies developed by the applicant are central to success of the work.	Significant conceptual and/or methodological novelty	Conceptually incremental. Uses standard methods to answer obvious questions, which may nevertheless be important.	Not addressed
Scope	Ambitious and unified long-term project with clear and feasible increments described.	Reasonable scope	Multiple objectives are either overly ambitious or excessively narrow	Trivial or absurdly excessive