

Effective Goal Setting for QB3-Berkeley PhDs (postdoc sample)

Use a “SMART” framework such as the one below to define goals, and to lay out the steps towards achieving them. For any skill or competency you wish to develop further, consider how it fits in your IDP, and your goals for the year.

Specific - What do you want to accomplish? Is the goal clear to you?

Measurable - What does the completed goal look like? What data will measure the outcome you are seeking? (e.g. “how much” or “how well”?)

Attainable - What will make it possible for you to attain the goal? What knowledge, abilities, and resources (including time!) will you employ to accomplish your aims?

Relevant - Does your goal align with the multiple priorities in your life? Why is the result important?

Time-bound - Specify a deadline for the goal and timeframe for any intermediary steps. What actions will it take on your part?

Describe the goal you are setting for yourself – what do you want to accomplish or what skill do you want to develop (be as specific as possible, including why this is important to you at this time):

I want to learn more about fellowships - I am definitely aiming for a faculty position after this, and it seems helpful to have a track record of getting your own funding. If it seems viable, I will plan to apply for fellowships this year.

1. what fellowships I should pursue (what exists and what I might be competitive for)
2. how to make my application as strong as possible
3. what is the timeline for securing funding

Describe how you will attain the goal – what actions will you take, what resources will you need (including help or actions by others such as your advisors):

- Talk to my PI about my options.
- Ask around/talk to current/former postdocs who got a K99-R01 in particular, but also other fellowships. How much time does it take to do these?!
- Use SPO <https://spo.berkeley.edu/guide/student.html> database and Pivot

Describe your timeframe for accomplishing the goal – make sure you include a list of intermediary steps towards its completion. If other’s actions are required, include those in your timeline/schedule:

- Talk to PI next time, hopefully after the lab meeting or in next week’s 1-on-1
- By the end of the next 2 weeks, talk to 2-3 postdocs who have the fellowships that are a good match about their experience/recommendations re. applying.
- By the end of the month, make a list of fellowships I should apply to (maybe top 3-?) & deadlines – start spreadsheet or bcal.
- Update my CV, biosketch and write research statement (get help from my PI and also maybe career center) by late October

Additional SMART goal information, and relevant examples

- <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2013/12/goal-setting-strategies-scientific-and-career-success>
- <https://irp.nih.gov/blog/post/2016/07/using-smart-goals-to-make-scientific-progress>
- <https://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2006/12/mastering-your-phd-setting-goals-success>