Early Career Faculty Trips to Washington

OVERVIEW

University leadership identifies promising early career research faculty in varied disciplines to participate in a trip to Washington, D.C. to visit with program officers at relevant federal agencies, typically organized around a specific theme or school/department. The overarching objective of the trip is to help faculty gain the information, skills, and networks they need to improve their success when competing for federal funding. This is an information gathering experience designed to enhance a faculty member’s understanding of the federal funding agencies. Thus, these trips expose early career researchers to federal programs in their field and give them access to advice on how and when to productively apply for grants and participate in other agency activities.

BENEFITS OF THE TRIP

The faculty members benefit from opening a dialogue with program officers about their research ambitions, learning about where their research fits best within an agency, and discussing the current interest and future directions of particular programs.

Other specific benefits include:

- Receiving first-hand information about research funding opportunities.
- Gaining an understanding of agency grant mechanisms and processes.
- Learning of non-funding ways to engage with the agency, such as serving on review panels or advisory councils.
- Building a network of federal contacts.
- Receiving suggestions for additional agency contacts.

WHO SHOULD ATTEND?

Faculty members that benefit from this type of trip are typically those who have yet to be awarded a federal grant and/or are in need of basic information about federal grant-making agencies and processes. The faculty members will have the opportunity to broaden their exposure to the federal government, start building a network of federal contacts, and gain assistance in their efforts to obtain federal funding for their research. Early-career faculty trips also help raise the profile of the university, highlighting an institution’s research expertise to federal agencies, which could pay dividends in the future. It is best to bring a group of 3 to 5 faculty members who work in a related field.

WHAT DOES LEWIS-BURKE DO?

Lewis-Burke will:

- Use its agency expertise to provide context regarding the current federal funding landscape and identify contacts for meeting targets.
- Coordinate individual and/or group calls with faculty to explain the purpose of the day and obtain a deeper understanding of which agencies and programs the faculty member is interested in pursuing.
- Prepare meeting background materials and host prep and de-briefing sessions in Washington on the day of the faculty visits.
- Participate in meetings if requested by the faculty member.
- Provide university administration with a summary of the trip and any necessary follow up actions.
Sample Timeline for Organizing an Early Career Faculty Trip
(Exceptions can be made to the process to meet client needs)

At least 2 months prior to the date of the trip:
• Determine whether an early career faculty trip is beneficial to your faculty.
• Identify a trip coordinator who will be the primary on-campus contact and will work with Lewis-Burke to coordinate the trip. The trip coordinator will assist faculty with travel arrangements/logistics, engage with Lewis-Burke on identifying meeting targets, and provide ongoing support to faculty in their trip preparations.
• Schedule a conference call between the trip coordinator and Lewis-Burke to discuss trip goals, prior experiences, and university and agency context. The call should also be used to define a theme for the visit – i.e. the broad research area that connects the faculty making the trip or the college/department.
• Determine the faculty who will be making the trip (a group of 3-5 people).
• Set a date for the trip.
• Faculty chosen for the trip complete and return to Lewis-Burke a questionnaire that defines their level of experience with various agencies, goals for the trip, and research interests.
• Lewis-Burke will schedule a call with each faculty member to explain the purpose of the day, review planning logistics, answer questions, and gain a better understanding of their goals for the trip.

At least 6 weeks prior to the date of the trip:
• Lewis-Burke will work with the trip coordinator and faculty members to define specific meeting targets at the agencies. Based on the individual faculty calls, Lewis-Burke will send suggested meeting targets to each faculty member along with program synopses and program officer contact information.
• Faculty members begin requesting meetings and notify Lewis-Burke when meetings have been scheduled. Lewis-Burke will request meetings only in the event that multiple faculty members wish to meet with the same program officer.
• Faculty members begin crafting 1-2 page leave behind materials highlighting their research interests.

Between 1-3 weeks prior to the date of the trip:
• Lewis-Burke will confirm all scheduled meetings with the faculty members and troubleshoot any scheduling issues that may have arisen. Faculty will complete their 1-2 page leave behind materials.
• A few days prior to the trip, Lewis-Burke will send background materials to each faculty member on the programs and people they will be visiting at each agency. Materials will also include confirmation of the meetings scheduled by each faculty member, any confirmed joint meetings, as well as logistical information for the day.

The day of the trip:
• Lewis-Burke will host a prep session in the Lewis-Burke offices first thing in the morning. If schedules allow, a debriefing session will be held at the end of the day to share intelligence from the visits; if a debriefing session is not possible, a phone call will be arranged in the following weeks.

Between 1-3 weeks following the date of the trip:
• Lewis-Burke will send follow-up emails instructing the faculty members to send thank you notes and any necessary follow up materials to the program officers with whom they met during their trip.
• Lewis-Burke will provide a summary of the visit to the trip coordinator and other university administrators.