

# The Postdoctoral Perspective

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Postdoctoral Focus Group Report

## Questions Posed

- How important is stipend level when choosing a position?
- What problems, specific to postdoctoral scientists, are the most important?
- In a zero sum system what do you want most, and what are you willing to sacrifice in order to achieve those desires?
- What recommendations do you have, both large and small, for reforming the system to make it better for future cohorts?

## Most Important Problems

- The lack of training as a graduate student or a postdoc for alternate career paths
- Substandard benefits packages and unreasonably low salaries based upon education and experience
- Time to independence
- Risk aversion by funding agencies to finance young scientists
- Family life- to have one or not
- The 'arm's race' among postdocs which is focused on production

## What do we want most?

- Training / Career Preparation
- Benefits for single and married postdocs
- Clear definition of what a postdoc is- training and/or production
- Payment commensurate with position and experience

## How would we pay for the changes?

- Reduction in the number of positions/awards
- Reallocation of grant monies to create more early career awards

# Recommendations

- Limit the number of Ph.D.s granted
  - Reduce the number of graduate students funded off of a grant
  - Target which fields have an oversupply and begin with them
- Develop a new system of mentoring in graduate school
  - Multiple advisors from different career paths
  - Diversify the classroom and laboratory research to deemphasize academic careers
- Calculate the salary of a postdoc as a percentage of faculty salary to alleviate salary compression and under compensation
- Create new postdoctoral awards that are portable in academia and industry
- Create cost sharing positions in industry to craft a new 'entrepreneurial postdoc'