



**To: CUNY Postdoctoral researcher supervisors**

**Information about a training / mentoring program for CUNY postdoctoral researchers**

CUNY postdoctoral researchers are invited to apply to the ASRC's NSF funded TRANSPIRE program.<sup>1</sup> Selected postdocs should be at a stage where they are starting to prepare to transition to an independent research position (e.g., as faculty or in industry). The program is interdisciplinary and as such, all fields are welcome. For the first year of this 2-year grant, the organizing theme is, broadly, "environmental impacts."

**Program rationale**

The intellectually siloed existence often experienced as postdocs may limit their development into independent investigators with the capacities to effectively address, with new ideas and research questions, the significant challenges facing society. Thus, post-doctoral researchers who are approaching their transition to independence are the ideal participants in this program.

The premise of the program is that guided dialogue and critiques, within trans-disciplinary groups and borrowing from team science approaches, can be harnessed to train postdoctoral researchers to formulate and evaluate their own impactful research questions as they transition towards becoming independent researchers and scholars.

The program will offer participating postdocs significant mentoring that is simultaneously a pilot study of a scaffolded transdisciplinary dialogic pedagogy (TRANSPIRE). For this research aspect, the driving question is whether TRANSPIRE is an effective strategy for embedding students in the process of germinating potentially transformative research questions that have the potential to contribute to solving seemingly intractable scientific and societal challenges (NSF's Germination program focus).

**Core activities (to take place within the academic year – no summers)**

- Small, intensive, interdisciplinary research bootcamps (6-8 postdocs, 1-2 Faculty Fellows, facilitator)
- Tiered mentoring and ongoing critical feedback.
- A research interval – 6 weeks (December – February) during which the postdocs will consult with their supervisors as well as work independently to research relevant literature and consider such things as the potential innovation, scientific significance, and technical feasibility of their ideas.
- Strategically scheduled panel reviews with the TRANSPIRE Advisory Board, for multidisciplinary scientific and technical feedback and targeted professional advice.
- Final products: Postdocs' individual research statements and chalk talks to support their job searches
- A skilled mentor and facilitator (Dr. Linda Vigdor, PI) with broad research development expertise will provide scaffolded activities and guide participants' development and their evolving articulation of research questions. Faculty Fellows (junior faculty) will also provide

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<sup>1</sup> National Science Foundation, Germination Program, award #2203605

insights and mentoring; in the process, the Fellows will also be mentored and have greater access to a broader network.

### **Postdoc supervisors' support and contributions**

- Postdocs *must* have their supervisor's support (see letter template below) to apply to and participate in the TRANSPIRE program.
- Each postdoc supervisor will also be invited to help evaluate their postdoc's development, based on work products, the evolution of research questions, and, to the degree the postdoc is willing to share, his or her reflective journals. Supervisors may also contribute to evaluating the TRANSPIRE program more broadly.

### **The TRANSPIRE Team**

PI, Bootcamp facilitator, and primary contact: **Dr Linda Vigdor** ([lvigdor@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:lvigdor@gc.cuny.edu)); co-PIs Dr Joshua Brumberg, Dean of the Sciences, GC and Interim Executive Director, ASRC; and Dr Rosemarie Wesson, Interim Associate Provost for Research, CCNY; an Advisory Board of senior faculty (**Dr. Kevin Gardner** (Director, ASRC's Structural Biology Initiative), **Dr. Ori Shafer** (Professor, ASRC's Neuroscience Initiative), **Dr. Maria Tamargo** (Professor of Chemistry, CCNY), **Dr. Yingli Tian** (Professor of Electrical Engineering, Grove School of Engineering, CCNY), **Dr. Tammy Lewis** (Professor of Sociology, Brooklyn College and Professor of Sociology and Earth and Environmental Sciences, CUNY GC), and **Dr. Melissa Checker** (Associate Professor of Urban Studies, Queens College and the PhD Programs in Anthropology and Environmental Psychology, CUNY GC); and, Faculty Fellows (junior faculty from an array of disciplines who will participate in the bootcamp sessions and co-mentor postdocs), and an evaluator.

For questions, please contact Linda Vigdor ([lvigdor@gc.cuny.edu](mailto:lvigdor@gc.cuny.edu)).



**Postdoc supervisor support letter**

Dear TRANSPIRE team:

This letter supports \_\_\_\_\_postdoc’s name\_\_\_\_\_ application to participate in the TRANSPIRE program. Program activities (bootcamp meetings, presentations, and other group activities) will be scheduled to accommodate participants. While the program is not intended to divert postdoc’s efforts or focus away from their postdoc responsibilities, it is likely that meetings or events may be scheduled during the workday or early evenings. The program will take place during the academic year (no summers).

As postdoc supervisors are essential to postdocs’ professional development, for the TRANSPIRE program we also invite/expect that supervisors will contribute additional mentoring to their postdoc during the program year. The primary focus of this mentoring will be in providing feedback to their postdoc regarding scientific and technical aspects of the postdoc’s evolving research questions and statements. The postdoc’s final products are expected to be a research statement and chalk talk that would support their job search for a faculty or other significant research position. Postdocs will also receive extensive mentoring from the TRANSPIRE team, during the bootcamp sessions and through more formal presentations to the Advisory Board and other mentors. All postdoc supervisors will also be invited to participate in presentations of the cohort’s work, at one or two events in the spring semester.

PD supervisors will also be invited to participate in the research component of the project – evaluating the effectiveness of the program. A separate consent letter will be sent to postdoc supervisors after the postdoc cohort is selected.

It is the postdoc’s responsibility to take the lead in steering the mentoring relationship with their supervisor and to keep their supervisor apprised of the TRANSPIRE activities, as needed.

I \_\_\_\_\_ postdoc supervisor\_\_\_\_\_ acknowledge that \_\_\_ postdoc \_\_\_, if selected for the TRANSPIRE program, has my full support to participate and that the TRANSPIRE schedule will be accommodated.

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Postdoc supervisor – print

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Title / College & Department

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Postdoc supervisor signature

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Date

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Postdoc name – print

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