## How do reviewers identify the winners?

**NSF uses two criteria to review all fellowship applications:**

* Intellectual Merit – “the potential to advance knowledge”
* Broader Impacts – “the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific desirable societal outcomes

**NSF tells reviewers to apply these criteria by considering whether:**

* You show potential to advance knowledge and achieve desired societal outcomes
* You explore creative, original or transformative concepts
* Your research plan is well reasoned, organized and justified
* You are qualified to conduct proposed research
* You have access to necessary resources

**Regarding intellectual merit, reviewers especially look to see whether you:**

* Have a record of progressive and goal-oriented preparation
* Present a research project generated by you (not your advisor)
* Deploy a clearly-defined and appropriate methodology

**Regarding broader impacts, reviewers especially look for:**

* *Demonstrable* impacts, not merely intentions
* Focus on bigger projects and goals to which specific research contributes community outreach
* Drive, perspective, and commitment needed to solve the problem
* A contribution to making science more diverse

**Taken together, reviewers are convinced by:**

* Deep thought (emphasizing minutiae without a sense of the big picture won’t win)
* A vision for the future of your field, its value, and a commitment to your project
* The connection between your career goals and motivation
* Your ability to communicate science to scholars and the public
* Progressive mastery of the research skills which the project requires
* A link between your past experiences and your future direction