 Timeline for Student:

TWO MONTHS IN ADVANCE:

NY: For my first submission I started around September for the December deadline. Starting earlier allowed me to not take much time off from lab work and to do this application after work hours and on weekends.

1. Get your eRA Commons ID 8-12 weeks before the grant deadline by contacting the BU grants office at 617-638-4600 or bumc-era@bu.edu.

2. Find the “Funding Opportunity Announcement” (FOA). This is the official NIH grant listing and contains the Funding Opportunity Number (FON), which you will need in order to download instructions for writing the grant.
   a. To get the FOA: Go to grants.gov, Click on “Search Grants”. If you are an MD/PhD student, search for “F30” in keywords. If you are a PhD student, search for “F31”. Find the F30 or F31 announcement that applies to you -if you are a PhD student, you want the “Parent F31” or “Parent F31-Diversity” if you are eligible.
   b. Download the application package, SF424 application instructions, as well as specific instructions linked to the Opportunity number. The Office of Proposal Development can assist with completing the application package, but you will need to review and reference the instructions in order to complete the required attachments.

3. Contact the Office of Proposal Development to notify them that you are planning to submit an NRSA grant and schedule a meeting with them at least 4 weeks prior to the deadline.
   [Link to contact information]
   They will get you a grants.gov folder on the BU network drive. They can also download the correct application for you, complete the administrative information as well as assist in completing the internal institutional paperwork. They will work with you through the ENTIRE grant submission process, and will ultimately be the people who will send the grant to the office of sponsored programs at BU, who then submit the proposal.
   Note: Students who are enrolled in Pharmacology MUST submit their NRSA grant applications through the Pharmacology Department, even if their research advisor has a primary appointment in a different department.

4. Read the “Individual Fellowship Application Guide SF424 (R&R)” COVER TO COVER. Don’t skip through -read it in order, even though it is very boring. This step is critical. Highlight or take notes on application pieces you need to write. Note that for the purpose of this grant, YOU are the “PI”.

5. Download “fellowship applicant biographical sketch format page”. You can get this from this website:
   [Link to application page]

   NY: I would suggest that the student figure out what study section they will be applying to within the specific branch of the NIH (ie I applied to the “behavioral neuroscience” study section in NIDA). Once you figure out the study section, you can then find the program officer (PO). I would advise the student and their PI to schedule a phone call with the PO to discuss the application. My PO gave me a really nice check list of things to include in my application, and many of these tips were not found in the SF424 guide. Each PO has their own list of recommendations apparently. Having the relationship with the PO has been REALLY helpful for me. Just last week they called me and asked me for a list of items to help defend my application in Study Section. Another thing, some POs even offer to look over the application if you finish it in advance. I never finished soon enough, but wish I did this.

6. Get your transcript from college and GRE scores from the departmental educational administrator, or, if the ones on file at BU are not complete, get your transcript from your college. Go online and find your BU grades. Use these to fill out the biographical sketch template according to the instructions in the SF424 guide. You will also need to write a personal statement.
NY: I included a complete list of my BS, MS and PhD grades on my biosketch. Apparently GRE scores are no longer supposed to be included in the biosketch (at least I know this is true for NIDA).

7. You will need at least 3 letters of recommendation (no more than 5). Ask two months in advance if possible, one month in advance at minimum. At least one of your referees should be from outside of your current department. Your sponsor/co-sponsor cannot serve as a referee. The Fellowship Reference Form previously used with Fellowship applications is no longer required but the referees should be given specific content instructions found on page I-105 of the NIH Fellowship instruction guide. http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424_RR_Guide_Fellowship_VerC_2014.pdf
The referees must electronically submit their letters at https://public.era.nih.gov/commons/public/reference/submitReferenceLetter.do?mode=new no later than 5 PM the due date of the application. In order to submit their letters, the referees will need to know your eRA Commons username, your full name, and the FON (number) of the grant you are applying for.

NY: I would also suggest a bunch of letters of support. I know there is a huge emphasis on training for the F31, so students must find PIs (preferably local) to collaborate with. If their PIs have a history of collaboration (papers or grants) with them even better. In order to really convince study section, letters of support must be provided. One tip I got from my PO for the “Goals for Fellowship & Career” section, students need to specifically mention career goals… and if they can even find a post doc adviser, then list them and get a letter of support from them. It screams “I’M VERY SERIOUS ABOUT THIS”. Students should hunt down these PIs at conferences ASAP, and forge a relationship with them.

8. Plan your research strategy with your advisor: Determine the Rationale, Hypothesis and Specific Aims. Begin writing your Research Strategy. Meet with your advisor to decide which people, if any, you will collaborate with. Note: The review committee strongly considers the strength of the training program, and having training beyond the expertise of your main lab is considered a strong positive. You may want to designate collaborators as “co-sponsor” or “senior/key person”. Anybody you ask to be a “co-sponsor” or “senior/key person” will need to give you a biographical sketch. Although the person may have a biosketch on file, they will need to tweak the personal statement in the biosketch to pertain to your proposal, so you need to ask for this early on. If you want a letter of support from a collaborator, you can attach it in an “additional info” section on the application.

NY: I listed Dr. Wolozin as my Co-Sponsor (no LoR was needed, but he provided me with material for the Sponsor/Co-Sponsor section), and then my collaborators as “Co-Mentors” and that seemed to be okay. Also for ALL Co-mentors/sponsor/co-sponsor a biosketch is needed. They really like these biosketches to be TAILORED to the applicant, including only publications and a tailored summary that really emphasizes how they will help the project.

ONE MONTH IN ADVANCE:

9. You should be finishing up your proposal, which is officially called your “Research Strategy”. Page limits: 1 page for the Specific Aims, 6 pages for the Research Strategy (including figures and timeline). Make sure your proposal adheres to all formatting requirements (margins, font, text size, etc). Details are on page I-21 of the SF424 Fellowship guide.

Talk to your advisor about the scientific content!!! Sections for the student to complete in addition to the actual scientific research plan: Abstract, Sponsor and Institution Selection, Specific Aims, Career Goals, Planned Activity During Award Period, Research Experience, Respective Contributions, Summary, Narrative (this is actually a Relevance section), Responsible Conduct of Research, Works Cited/Bibliography, and the Cover Letter. All of these documents have specific limits and instructions, so you need to make sure you read the SF424 document carefully.
   a. Don’t forget to write your personal statement in your biosketch.
   b. Make sure your advisor is taking care of the Facilities and Equipment and Other Resources files, and the Vertebrate Animals, Human Subjects and Resource Sharing Plan pieces if those are applicable to your grant.

1 WEEK IN ADVANCE:

10. YOUR FINAL AND COMPLETE GRANT IS DUE AT THE OFFICE OF SPONSORED RESEARCH (OSP)!!!! The Office of
Proposal Development will help you complete the grant proposal and will send the final grant proposal to OSP. Then, OSP is the entity at BU that actually submits your grant. They are required to review and certify all grant applications are correct and compliant. OSP requires having the grant application 8 business days before the actual due date (although there is some flexibility there).

11. **Required cover letter**: List the following information:
   a. Application title
   b. Funding Opportunity Title of the NIH initiative
   c. Request of assignment to a particular NIH institute
   d. List of Individuals who should not review your application and why (if applicable)
   e. Disciplines involved, if multidisciplinary
   f. Statement that you have attached any required agency approval documentation for the type of application submitted
   g. List of Referees- including names, degrees, and affiliations

12. **Access your application on the network folder**. Keep in communication with the Office of Proposal Development as to when components of your proposal are final and ready to be uploaded into the application.

13. **Once your grant is submitted (by the sponsored programs office)**, keep an eye on eRA Commons to see if it’s been accepted and review the final application online to confirm everything transmitted correctly.

14. **If any corrections are needed after submission**, the grant must be recalled, corrected and resubmitted by OSP before 5pm on deadline day. This is why it is important to submit the grant well in advance of the deadline.

**Timeline for Sponsoring Professor**

1. Submit a biosketch (with specific personal statement and no more than 15 relevant references) to the Office of Proposal Development.
2. Submit the Facilities and Equipment and Other Resources files to the Office of Proposal Development.
3. Submit the Vertebrate Animals, Human Subjects, or Resource Sharing Plan files to the Office of Proposal Development IF they are required for this grant. (These are not always mandatory -read the specific requirements.)
4. Write the training plan. This is included under the Sponsor Information section. It must be 6 pages or less. This is very important to the success of the grant.