

Peer Review Enhancements: Info for Reviewers At-A-Glance Changes for NIH Fiscal Year 2010

The NIH is implementing a number of changes to the peer review process, beginning with applications submitted for Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 funding consideration (mostly applications first submitted in January 2009 and reviewed at Spring/Summer meetings and October 2009 national advisory council meetings). Reviewers should be aware of the following:

- changes to the review and scoring process;
- changes in preparation of written critiques;
- clustering of New and Early Stage Investigator applications;
- fewer resubmission applications.

Although the scoring and procedural changes described in this handout will not be in effect for grant applications reviewed at the winter meetings (which typically occur in February/March for applications under consideration for FY2009 funding), they will be discussed at these meetings to help reviewers prepare for the next round of peer review meetings (~May/June 2009). More specific information will be provided before the spring/summer meetings. For more details on these and other developments, see the Enhancing Peer Review Web site at <http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov>.

Changes to review and scoring processes and critique formats

Goal: To increase reliability, consistency, and transparency, applications will be reviewed and scored under a new system and reviewer critiques will be guided by standardized templates. See [NOT-OD-09-024](#) and [NOT-OD-09-025](#).

- **Scores will be based on a 9-point rating scale.** The new scoring system will use a 9-point rating scale (1 = exceptional; 9 = poor). Only integers will be used for scoring. Before the review meeting, each assigned reviewer and discussant will give a preliminary impact/priority score to each of their assigned applications. These preliminary impact/priority scores will help the review committee determine which applications will be discussed at the review meeting. After discussing an application, each eligible committee member (without conflict of interest, etc.) will give a final impact/priority score, which should reflect their evaluation of the overall impact that the project is likely to have on the research field. The overall impact/priority score for each application will be the average of all the final impact/priority scores, multiplied by 10 (the 81 possible overall impact/priority scores will range from 10 – 90, with 10 being the best possible final score). The preliminary and final impact/priority scores assigned by each reviewer and discussant will be determined primarily by consideration of the five core review criteria. An application does not need to be strong in all five core review criteria to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

- **Scoring Individual Criteria:** For applications for research grants and cooperative agreements, the core review criteria are Significance, Investigator(s), Innovation, Approach, and Environment. As applicable for an application, or as described in the Funding Opportunity Announcements for particular RFAs and PARs, additional review criteria may factor into impact/priority scores.

The core review criteria for other types of applications (such as career development award applications or SBIR/STTR applications) are still in place. For all types of applications, there will be 5 core review criteria that will be scored individually on the 9-point rating scale described above. For all applications, including those not discussed by the full committee, the criterion scores given by the assigned reviewers and discussants on the five core review criteria will be reported individually in the summary statement.

- **Formatted Reviewer Critiques.** All written critiques for a given type of application will use the same template, so that the applicant and NIH staff can easily discern the scores and comments for each criterion in the summary statement. Specific templates will be used for different categories of applications (e.g. research grants, career development awards, SBIR/STTR applications, etc), to accurately capture the different review criteria for those categories.

Clustering of New Investigator applications for FY2010 funding consideration

To help accelerate the transition of investigators to independence, New Investigators (including Early Stage Investigators) will be supported at success rates comparable to established investigators submitting new applications. Early Stage Investigators are expected to be the majority of New Investigators. Where possible, applications from New Investigators will be clustered during the review process.

Resubmission of amended applications for FY2010 funding consideration

Goal: To increase the likelihood that new, meritorious applications will be funded and to reduce the administrative burden on applicants and reviewers, new applications and competing renewal applications that are received for funding consideration in FY2010 and beyond will be allowed only one resubmission. See [NOT-OD-09-003](#).

Because different receipt dates exist for different categories of applications, and because policy allows for continuous submission for permanent members of study sections, no single overall cut-off date exists for implementation of this policy. As an example, the last new R01 applications eligible for potential A2 submissions were those submitted for the October 5/November 5, 2008 dates (for non-AIDS research) or for January 7, 2009 for AIDS research. For study section members taking advantage of the continuous submission option, the cutoff for assignment to May 2009 council (the last council of FY 2009) was December 16, 2008 for non-AIDS research and February 7, 2008 for AIDS research. Thus, submissions after October/November 5, 2008, going to FY 2010 councils, will fall under the new policy of not allowing more than one re-submission.