

Enhancing Peer Review: Implementation of Recommended Actions

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Background

“fund the best science, by the best scientists, with the least amount of administrative burden”

Year-long Deliberative Effort Gathering Feedback & Input:

- Request for Information
- NIH Staff survey
- IC White Papers
- Internal Town Hall Meetings
- External Consultation Meetings
- Data Analysis
- Internal and External Working Groups

Peer Review Oversight Committee (PROC) Established Working Groups:

- 1.Engage the Best Reviewers
- 2.Improve the Quality and Transparency of Review
- 3.Ensure Balanced and Fair Reviews Across Scientific Fields and Career Stages
- 4.Continuous Review of Peer Review

Diagnostic

June 2007 – Feb. 2008

Design
Implementation
Plan

March 2008 – June 2008

Begin Phased
Implementation
of Selected
Actions

September 2008

**Identified Key
Recommendations**

Summary of Recommendations



Implementation Overview

Priority Area 1 – Engage the Best Reviewers

- **Improve Reviewer Retention.** In 2009, new reviewers will be given additional flexibility regarding their tour of duty and other efforts will be undertaken to improve retention of standing review members.
- **Recruit the Best Reviewers.** A toolkit, incorporating best practices for recruiting reviewers, will be made available to all NIH Institutes and Centers (ICs) in 2009.
- **Enhance Reviewer Training.** In spring 2009, training will be available to reviewers and Scientific Review Officers (SROs) related to the changes in peer review.
- **Allow Flexibility through Virtual Reviews.** Pilots will be conducted in 2009 on the feasibility of using high-bandwidth support for review meetings to provide reviewers greater flexibility and alternatives for in-person meetings.



Implementation Overview

Priority Area 2 – Improve the Quality and Transparency of Review

- **Improve Scoring Transparency and Scale.** Review criteria-based scoring commences in May 2009. Reviewers will provide feedback through scores and critiques for each criterion in a structured summary statement.
- **Provide Scores for Streamlined Applications.** Currently, applications that are not considered to be in the top half are “streamlined.” Streamlined applications are not discussed by the full review committee and have no scoring information but the applicants do receive the reviewers’ critiques. In 2009, streamlined applications will receive scores on each criterion in addition to the reviewers’ critiques to help applicants assess whether or not they should resubmit an amended application.
- **Shorten and Restructure Applications.** Shorter (12 page research strategy section) R01 applications will be restructured to align with review criteria for January 2010 receipt dates. For R01 applications involving Human Subjects Research, an additional 6 pages will be available for the research strategy section.
 - **Length of applications for other activity codes will be scaled appropriately.**

Implementation Overview

Priority Area 3 – Ensure Balanced and Fair Reviews across Scientific Fields and Career Stages, and Reduce Administrative Burden

New NIH Policy to Fund Meritorious Science Earlier. To ensure that the largest number of high quality and meritorious applications receive funding earlier and to improve system efficiency, NIH will enhance success rates of new and resubmitted applications by decreasing the number of allowed grant application resubmissions (amendments) from two to one. See the enhancing peer review web site (<http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov>) for the guide notice (NOT-OD-09-003), clarification guide notice (NOT-OD-09-016), supporting data and press release.

Review Like Applications Together. NIH recently announced new policies modifying the NIH New Investigator Policy to identify Early Stage Investigators (ESIs), and establishing goals to encourage funding for new investigators and ESIs (see NOT-OD-08-121 and NOT-OD-09-013). In 2009, where possible, NIH will cluster new investigator applications (including ESIs) for review. The same approach will be considered for clinical research applications.

Communications & Training

The Enhancing Peer Review Web Site is continually being updated as information is known, featuring:

- ✓ Up-To-Date Information on Implementation of each Priority Area
- ✓ Frequently Asked Questions and Answers
- ✓ Timelines
- ✓ Information on Pilots
- ✓ NIH Guide Notices Relating to Peer Review Changes
- ✓ Press Releases on Peer Review Changes
- ✓ Training Materials

Other Outreach for both Internal and External Communities:

- ✓ Question/Answer Web Chats
- ✓ Peer Review ListServ providing up-to-date information
- ✓ Training Sessions
- ✓ Monthly published updates in Nexus and Peer Review Notes
- ✓ Frequent Guide Notices on Peer Review Enhancements

