

The NIH Grant Review Process

NIH is divided into two sections

- 1) Center for Scientific Review (CSR)
- 2) Institutes and Centers (eg., NIDDK, NCI, NHLBI)

What is the difference?

CSR organizes the review of proposals via study sections

Institutes/Centers define programs and determine funding based on priority scores and program priorities

The NIH Grant Review Process

Center for Scientific Review

- Study sections run by Scientific Review Administrator (SRA)
- SRA assigns proposals to study section members
- SRA organizes study section meeting
- SRA gives instructions and updates to reviewers prior to meeting
- SRA assembles final review comments and writes summary

The NIH Grant Review Process

Who is your Program Officer (PO)?

- A PO is your advocate in the institutes (usually)
- POs are not involved in the review process
- Good POs attend study section meetings to take notes but usually do not speak at the meeting
- You should speak to your PO after you receive your summary statement
- Develop a good relationship with your PO

THE NIH STUDY SECTION

Membership

- Study section members are chosen by the SRA
- Retiring members are often asked to suggest replacements
- One person acts as Chair and leads discussions

Meetings

- 3 times per year – usually all day, sometimes 2 days
- Each review can last between 5 mins and 20 mins
- Applications are discussed in order based on initial scores posted online prior to meeting – best to worst.
- “Streamlined”/triaged grants (50%) are not discussed

THE NIH STUDY SECTION

Responsibilities of members

- Review about 9 grants (as primary, secondary or third reviewer)
- Write clear reviews and give a score from 1 (best) – 9 (worst)
- Declare conflict of interest if appropriate (e. g., same institution)
- Attend meetings regularly
- Be diligent, honest and fair – no personal attacks or innuendo

THE NIH STUDY SECTION

What does your score mean?

- Scores range from 1 (best) to 9 (worst)
- We are encouraged to “spread the scores”
- The actual score itself reflects the level of enthusiasm
- There are several scored categories, but only one overall score that counts in the end (it is not an average)
- Scores determine the “percentile”, which determines funding
- A given score (e. g., 25) may be funded in one institute, but not another

THE NIH STUDY SECTION

1) Read “Am I ready to write an RO1?” on ORCD website

- Independence
- Transformative project
- Publications
- Collaborators
- Environment
- Writing skills

2) Know your audience at study section

3) Understand the priority areas of your institute/center?