How to Make the NIH Study Section Work for You?

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Assumption: You know the Holy Grail of an utterly important medical issue.

Quest: You want NIH to fund your journey as an independent investigator.

Bottomline: You need $$$.
Timeline (Clinical Molecular Imaging and Probe Development):

Feb. 5, 2010 (or Mar. 5, 2010): “Enter”;

March 16, 2010: Master List for COI;

Apr. 8, 2010: IAR “enabled”;

May 27, 2010: Reviews Due;

What did I do in the 49 days:

Overall Impact score is NOT an average of five criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Impact</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moderate Impact</td>
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<td>Very Good</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>Low Impact</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Non-numeric score options: NR = Not Recommended for Further Consideration, DF = Deferred, AB = Abstention, CF = Conflict, NP = Not Present, ND = Not Discussed

Best Science

Institution Investment

Personal Statement
Behind the Closed Door:
Who were there with laptops (Prog. Dir.)
Conflict of interests (dir. app. etc) (SRO)
Order (Best OIS, YY vs non-YY) (SRO)
Procedures (Chair)

1st Reviewer: 1 sentence + OIscore (1~9);
2nd Reviewer: score; 3rd : score.

Length of discussion (Sciences + HS, AS).
Scores (full range for 1to3, set for others; discussion DO NOT alter).

Budget (Not scored, in theory).

Resume & Summary of Discussion (SRO)
A grant is a self-contained art work but only read by <3 “clueless” people unless there are some sound bites.

Two-tier Study Section system is the best human invention.

Why does she/he got a good score? **Because the Reviewer likes it!**

Reviewers volunteer their service to advise NIH ($200/day in meeting).
Improving Your Score:

Things you cannot control:
Reviewers are human;
Time discussed and scoring scale.

Things you may control:
Knowing your reviewers (resub, 1pg).

Things you can control:
You are the expert, teach me something new.
Grant reviews vs. paper reviews;
Help your supporter (Signi., PI, Inno)
Making reviewers’ life easier:
--- Write a reader friendly grant;
Reviewers are human
Write a reader friendly grant:

Do you need every inch of that 12/6 pages?

--- Can you spare some for me?

Title and Project Description:

--- Think about the other reviewers.

Font, format, lousy grant = lousy mind.

Ask colleagues (non-experts) to read, even if English is your ONLY language.

Budget: $250k, 10 modules vs. None

NCI cuts (<$200k, 12.5%; >$200k, 14.5%).

Biosketch: personal statement, format.

Resources: Institutional Investment (new!)
Write a reader friendly grant:

Specific Aims (1 page with spaces):

- n = 3 (R01)
- n = 2 (R21)

Hypothesis is not required but HELPFUL;
Need testable milestones if no Hypo.
Avoid aims in series connection.
Use “quantitative terms”, be specific, short,
No “a variety of …”.
Differentiate Aims from Objectives.

Impact!
Write a reader friendly grant:

Research Strategy (Signi, Inno, 12/6 pages):

Design by Aims
DOD style: Aims – Hypo – Rationale – Subjects
 - Data Analysis – Expected Results.
Method: Reserve for common procedures.
Disclosure Details (no “approximately”),
but not drown me w/ Details (Best Science).
Do not forget your clinical collaborators
(Do you have a pathologist, or a radiologist?
Study Section member??)

Biomed disease: STATISTICS!
HS: Minority!! (This is a part of your score!)
HS &AS: inappropriate materials
Write a reader friendly grant:

**Research Strategy (Preliminary Studies):**
Do not assume your published results are known; summarize relevant w/ references.

**One Black/White Fig.** better than 1000 words, but needs informative legends (that can be read in one glance)!!! Do not assume color.

Do provide Figures of publication qualities in Text.

Do not depend on your copies in the Appendix! (and the supplemental materials)
Write a reader friendly grant:

Introduction (1 page):

AIM: Getting money, but not getting into fight.
There is no EIC between you and the reviewer.
Reviewers are NOT malicious.
Do not assume all the reviewers saw your last proposal, only summary statement provided.
Clearly label changes to avoid new questions.
Never: give me money, I will show you results.
Be positive, no need to have the last word.
New results (data, developments, etc).
Some Suggestions:
Carefully read the Resume & Summary. Talk to your program director to learn more about what happened during the meeting, but not the SRO, not the SS members in the Room. Do not bother by seemingly conflict comments between different reviewers. Provide armaments so that your advocates can speak on your behalf. Clear presentation=short discussion=hi score. Make sure to check New and Early Investigator.
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