

PEER REVIEW NOTES

September 2006

Big Changes Supported by Advisory Committee



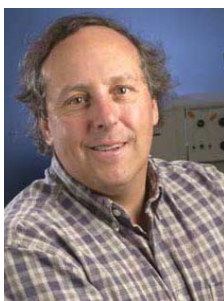
The NIH Peer Review Advisory Committee (PRAC) enthusiastically supported considering two major changes to ease burdens on both applicants and reviewers and to improve the identification and support of more significant, innovative, and high-impact research. NIH leadership also has endorsed these changes.

Shorten the NIH Grant Application: Our applicants and reviewers bear heavy burdens writing and reviewing NIH applications, with the R01 application at 25 pages not counting CVs, budgets, bibliographies and appendices. Shorter applications could greatly improve our reviews: each reviewer could read more applications, our study sections could be smaller, and we could be more successful in recruiting reviewers. Also, shorter applications could help free both applicants and reviewers from getting bogged down in experimental details and increase their focus on significance, impact on the field and innovation. A Trans-NIH Committee to Shorten the Application has already been established to advance this objective.

Improve the identification of significant, innovative and high-impact research: Keith Yamamoto, Executive Vice Dean, UCSF School of Medicine, told PRAC that the current review process favors predictable research, experimental detail and extensive preliminary data, and the paradigms of established "experts." He called for NIH to develop a new review and funding mechanism that fosters both innovative and transformative research that can lead to rapid progress and quantum leaps in science. PRAC members encouraged CSR and the rest of NIH to aggressively explore this general goal.

View the August 28 PowerPoints Via the PRAC Web Site: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/peer/prac/index.htm>.

Katrina-Battered Reviewer Comes Through



Immunologist Seth Pincus fled Children's Hospital in New Orleans in the wake, literally, of Hurricane Katrina. He had stayed with the patients in the uptown hospital throughout the August 2005 hurricane. In the chaos and loss of power and other services that followed, he helped get patients moved to safe facilities elsewhere. Despite the overwhelming tasks to recover in the months that followed, Pincus came through for CSR and NIH grant applicants by continuing to serve on the HIV/AIDS Vaccine Study Section. We honor his commitment and share his insights in a new article on our Reviewer Stories Web site: <http://cms.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/CSRReviewerStories>.

CSR to Host Open House Workshops for Stakeholder Input

Starting in early 2007, CSR will begin Open House Workshops to increase the participation of the scientific community in the peer review process and to obtain feedback on the structure of our Study Sections, which were realigned several years ago, and our new initiatives. Six separate meetings involving the CSR Director, CSR and NIH staff, and leaders of scientific societies and disease groups will begin in February with a workshop focusing on the neurosciences review groups. Meetings with leaders representing other areas of science will continue every other month through 2007.

CSR Tentative Open House Meeting Schedule - 2007

Month	Integrated Review Groups (IRGs)
February 2007	Brain Disorders and Clinical Neuroscience (BDCN) Integrative, Functional and Cognitive Neuroscience (IFCN) Molecular, Cellular and Developmental Neuroscience (MDCN)
April 2007	Biobehavioral and Behavioral Processes (BBBP) Health of the Population (HOP) Risk, Prevention and Health Behavior (RPHB)
June 2007	AIDS and Related Research (AARR) Infectious Diseases and Microbiology (IDM) Oncological Sciences (ONC) Surgical Sciences, Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (SBIB)
August 2007	Digestive Sciences (DIG) Musculoskeletal, Oral and Skin Sciences (MOSS) Renal and Urological Sciences (RUS) Endocrinology, Metabolism, Nutrition and Reproductive Sciences (EMNR)
October 2007	Immunology (IMM) Hematology (HEME) Cardiovascular Sciences (CVS) Respiratory Sciences (RES) Biology of Development and Aging (BDA)
December 2007	Biological Chemistry and Macromolecular Biophysics (BCMB) Bioengineering Sciences and Technologies (BST) Cell Biology (CB) Genes, Genomes and Genetics (GGG)

“We look forward to the opportunity to become more engaged with representatives of the scientific community,” says Toni Scarpa, CSR Director. “We need their input to see if their science is evaluated well in their study sections and to improve our review groups and to find new ways to improve the overall peer review process, which is the keystone of NIH research.” CSR will share the meeting details as soon as they are finalized. Contact Don Luckett, openhouse@csr.nih.gov, 301-435-1111.

New CSR Improvement Efforts



More consistent and efficient reviews: We have established a Best Practices Committee to set new guidelines for improving critical practices related to developing rosters, determining when to use different types of meetings, and structuring summary statements.

Shorter Meetings: Many reviewers tell us about the time and travel burdens they bear attending meetings. In response, we have implemented a new policy to reduce study section meetings to one day when doable and desirable. Streamlining 50% of our applications now gives us opportunities to do this.

Electronic Referrals at CSR: A major pilot will begin this fall to use text fingerprinting and artificial intelligence software to assign applications to our review groups. Referral staff will monitor and assist this effort. Further implementation is expected in 2007, reducing our processing cycle and speeding our response time to applicants by 2-3 weeks.

Shortening the Review Cycle: A pilot began last February offered shortened review cycles for 631 new investigators in 40 CSR study sections. Fourteen percent of these researchers took advantage of the shortened cycles to reapply in the next round, saving 4 months. We hope to offer this option to all new

investigators and then to most applicants. Since we now post summary statements/scores 1-2 months earlier, many applicants can already resubmit in the next round.

Electronic Application Update: Numbers Double and the Process Improves



Many review groups will see them: Over 7,000 electronic applications have been received for the January 2007 council round. This is more than double the number received in the last round, raising the total number of electronic applications processed to date to over 12,000. This jump came as NIH required more grant applications to be submitted via Grants.gov for the June 1 deadline—all small grants (R03), Exploratory/Developmental grants (R21, R33, R21/R33) and Clinical Trial Planning grants (R34).

Experience and training paid off: Despite large volume increases, the June transition was fairly smooth for NIH and applicant institutions. We were encouraged to see an increase in applications submitted early and with fewer errors. The keys to success are simple: read and follow directions, start early so there is no need for panic, and ask for help when you need it.

A few more mechanisms go electronic this fall: Construction Grants (C06), Research Demonstration and Dissemination Projects (R18), and Education Projects (R25). The NIH Director's Pioneer Award Program (DP1) will go electronic in January.

Form Changes were implemented by Grants.gov, so NIH had to repost hundreds of Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) in the *NIH Guide*. The Inclusion Enrollment Report and the Progress Report Publication List were separated into two attachments. These items will not be counted in the page limit for the Research Plan. New sections were added for Select Agent Research and the Multiple PI Leadership Plan (presently to be only used in special Funding Opportunity Announcements). Further information and updates can be found online: <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-06-103.html>.

How to Apply: Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOAs) are posted in the *NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts*: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>. The “Apply for Grant Electronically” button now found in FOAs is the best way to access the most current application package in Grants.gov.

R01 Rollout: A lot of work is underway to be ready for the February 2007 transition date for R01 applications, when two-thirds of all NIH applications go electronic. Hundreds of FOAs will be reissued in the *NIH Guide* starting in early November, and there will be a generic “parent” R01 FOA as well. To prepare, we are making sure our computer systems are ready to handle the influx. NIH also is hosting training for staff and applicants, and the depth and breadth of NIH Help Desk staff is being increased. In addition, receipt dates will be spread to level the workload and better control peak volume.

Get Ready: Every institution and investigator should get ready now by completing all the registration requirements: <http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt/preparing.htm>. Institutions must be registered with Grants.gov. This includes obtaining a DUNS number and CCR registration. Institutions and **every** Principal Investigator must be registered in the eRA Commons, and it is a good

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- Electronic Submission: <http://era.nih.gov/ElectronicReceipt>
- OER Grants Page: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm>
- NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts: <http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>
- CSR Web site: <http://www.csr.nih.gov>

idea to do it now even if you do not plan to submit soon. Investigators also should make sure their Commons information is accurate and up to date.

E-Submissions: A Staff Story From the Trenches



“My first reaction was, ‘This is not going to be good,’” Scientific Review Administrator (SRA) Vonda Smith recalled, a wry grin spreading across her face. “I wasn’t disappointed . . .” Dr. Smith was one of 50 or so SRAs at CSR to face an electronic baptism-by-fire when small business applicants went electronic last December. Vonda has many reasons to believe things will go much better when R01 application go electronic for the Feb 1, 2007 deadline. Read her story on our Staff Stories Web site: <http://cms.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/CSRStaffStories>.

Be an SRA: Employment Opportunities at CSR

Would you like to work with the most accomplished scientists in your field to provide fair and expert peer review of research and training grant applications submitted to NIH? CSR is recruiting dynamic, experienced research scientists in a variety of scientific areas to serve as Scientific Review Administrators, who are the focal point of NIH peer review. The successful candidate will be a respected, accomplished scientist with maturity, integrity and outstanding communication skills.

<p>Requirements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M.D. or Ph.D. degree or equivalent training or experience in biomedical or behavioral sciences • Independent research accomplishments in your field, with an outstanding publication record and administrative background <p>Compensation and Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation is commensurate with research experience and accomplishments • Full Civil Service package of benefits is available, including— <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Retirement and thrift savings plans + Health, life, and long-term care insurance 	<p>The Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze grant applications for key topic areas, • Recruit experts • Conduct study section meetings • Prepare review documents <p>The position involves travel to scientific meetings, training in health science administration, opportunities to serve the larger NIH community, and career development activities.</p>
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For information about current opportunities as an SRA at CSR, go to our Web site: <http://cms.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/Employment>. Feel free to call (301) 435-1111 as well, if you have any questions.

How I Became a Review Intern



Tanya Hoodbhoy's Story in the Association for Women in Science Magazine
<http://www.awis.org/publications/magazine/35-2/fow.pdf>

CSR Also Seeks Interns

Our Review Internship Program provides 1 to 2-years of training within CSR to biomedical and behavioral research scientists interested in careers in science administration. Interns are mentored by an experienced SRA and receive hands-on experience as well as other training. They frequently are successful in applying for SRA positions at CSR or other positions at NIH. More information is available online: <http://cms.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/Employment/CSRReviewInternshipProgram.htm>.

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