GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW OF HIGH END SHARED INSTRUMENTATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND

The review of proposals for the High End Shared Instrumentation Program of the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) requires a very different approach from that used for the review of other types of applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health. The program announcement for this grant mechanism should be examined carefully prior to reviewing any applications, paying particular attention to the sections on review procedures and criteria. (http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-07-383.html)

Prepare your reviews according to the following headings. You may add more comments if you like, but please organize your reviews in the format indicated below. If this is an amended application, address the applicant's response to the earlier summary statement.

SECTIONS OF THE SUMMARY STATEMENT

RESUME: This is a brief statement on the nature of the application (instrument requested, number of users, type of research) and general comments on the overall need of the users which led you to your final recommendation and level of enthusiasm.

CRITIQUE:
Justification of Need:
Is the need for the instrument clearly and adequately justified? Is the equipment essential and appropriate? Will the instrument requested have a significant impact on biomedical/ behavioral research and contribute to the advancement of human health?

Technical Expertise:
Does the institution have the high-level technical expertise and access to the necessary infrastructure to make effective use of the requested equipment? How well-qualified are the participating investigators to operate and maintain the instrument, conduct the projects, and evaluate the research results? Are there collaborations in place between disciplinary and interdisciplinary scientists?

Research Projects:
Will research with the requested instrument advance the knowledge and understanding of the proposed projects? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding? Are there appropriate plans in place for record keeping and bioinformatics?

Institutional Commitment:
What is the evidence of institutional commitment to support the instrument? Is institutional infrastructure (technical support, space, environment and utilities) available to support the instrument? Is there an institutional track record for making technology available?

Administration:
Is the plan for the management and maintenance of the requested instrument appropriate? Are there plans for maximizing the effectiveness of the investment in instrumentation? Is the membership of the advisory committee broadly based to oversee the use of the instrument for a wide range of biomedical investigators? How will research time be allocated among the projects?

Financial Plan:
Is the financial plan for fully funding the purchase and long-term operation and maintenance of the instrument reasonable? Is there appropriate documentation (letters from institutional officials)?

BUDGET:
Base your budget recommendation on the total cost of upgrading or acquiring an appropriately equipped, but cost-effective, instrument. Recommend deletions or changes for inappropriate items. Do not concern yourself with the administrative cost floor or ceiling given in the program announcement. Please be specific in describing the requisite capabilities of an instrument appropriate to the needs of the investigators. This information should be valuable not only for NCRR staff in negotiating the terms of an award, but also to investigators who may have more limited experience than you with the requested instrumentation. You are to pass judgment on the need for and appropriateness of the requested instrumentation, not the research itself; these latter judgments have been rendered by other Study Sections.

STUDY SECTION MEETING PROCEDURES
Applications may be subjected to streamlined review procedures. As an application comes up for discussion, the assigned reviewers will state their levels (or ranges) of enthusiasm using numbers from 1.0 (best) to 5.0 (worst). The median score of the group of applications being reviewed should be 3.0. The budget will be considered only after the application has been fully discussed and scored.

Summary statements for all applications will consist of the unedited critiques provided by the assigned reviewers and a Resume and Summary of Discussion written by the Scientific Review Officer after the meeting. Therefore, if reviewers change their opinions during the discussion, they should amend their written comments to reflect their opinions at the time of assigning a score to the application.

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