

# Instructions for Use of the Review Critique Template

The mission of the NIH is to support science in pursuit of knowledge about the biology and behavior of living systems and to apply that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. As part of this mission, applications submitted to the NIH for grants or cooperative agreements to support biomedical and behavioral research are evaluated for scientific and technical merit through the NIH peer review system.

## CHOOSING THE CRITIQUE TEMPLATE

Critique templates are available for several mechanisms. Please be sure to use the appropriate critique template for the applications that are assigned to you. You may download critique template(s) from IAR, from OER ([http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer\\_guidelines.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer_guidelines.htm)), or from your Compact Disc. You may also have received critique templates from your Scientific Review Officer (SRO).

This document provides general instructions on how to use the critique templates. Additional instructions for evaluating specific types of applications are available in each of the Guide for Reviewers documents at [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer\\_guidelines.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer_guidelines.htm). Your SRO and the funding opportunity announcement (FOA) may also provide additional guidance and special review criteria.

## SECTIONS OF THE CRITIQUE TEMPLATE

The critique templates have the following sections:

1. Scored Review Criteria,
2. Additional Review Criteria,
3. Overall Impact/Priority (or Summary and Recommendations),
4. Additional Review Considerations, and
5. Additional Comments to Applicant.

Table 1 in this document provides an overview of the review criteria and considerations for different types of applications. Please see the Guide for Reviewers for each type of application (found at [http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer\\_guidelines.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/reviewer_guidelines.htm)) for more information on the criteria and considerations specific to that activity code.

## USING THE CRITIQUE TEMPLATE

***Please note that about half of the review critique template is protected within Microsoft Word.*** Protection is necessary to enable functions such as drop-down boxes. Another new characteristic of the standard critique templates (i.e., those available at the OER website) is that the templates contain hyperlinks to the full guidance for each criterion and consideration. Unfortunately, because of the protection of the critique templates, Microsoft Word 2003 users will be unable to access the criterion hyperlinks within the protected section of the document. To accommodate this peculiarity of Microsoft Word, we've created an accessible all-encompassing hyperlink at the top of each critique template for Microsoft Word 2003 users. Additionally, please note that the spelling and grammar check function within Microsoft Word is unavailable in the protected section.

The first section of the document, which contains the Overall Impact and the Scored Review Criteria, is UNPROTECTED. This means you can use the Spelling and Grammar Check in this section, and that hyperlinks will function for all users. Please enter your comments directly in the bulleted section for each criterion.

The second section of the document, which includes the Additional Review Criteria, Additional Review Considerations, and the Additional Comments to Applicants, is PROTECTED. This means that you will not be able to use the Spelling and Grammar Check in this section, and that the hyperlinks will not be accessible to Microsoft Word 2003 users. Gray shading indicates the presence of a form field (either a drop-down box or comments field) and should be used to record your assessment for a particular criterion or consideration.

**Please do not try to unprotect/protect the document, since it may result in a loss of data, especially for Microsoft Word 2003 users.**

The goal is to be concise and clear in your comments and opinions. The template provides space to list strengths and weaknesses for each of the core review criteria and the overall impact. The preferred method is to use bullets, but exception is allowed when a short narrative is warranted. If appropriate for the application, you may list strengths for some criteria and no weaknesses, or vice versa. Pressing enter at the end of your first bullet will create a second bullet. Although there will occasionally be the need for longer explanations of a particular strength or weakness, reviewers are strongly encouraged to limit their critiques to no more than ¼ page per core criterion or overall impact. Please keep your comments in other sections as brief as possible. Please focus on major strengths and weaknesses that affect your determination of the overall impact. Strengths and weaknesses that do not affect your determination of the overall impact may be included in the Additional Comments to Applicant section.

Enter your comments *directly on the template* and upload the document to IAR when completed. If you e-mail your critique to the SRO instead of uploading it into IAR, please send the critique as an attachment (rather than in the body of an email) to preserve the integrity of the form. All of the text that you enter in the critique template and your selections from the drop-down boxes will become part of the summary statement. **Do not record your scores on the critique template.**

Although not part of your critique, if you are a primary reviewer, you may wish to prepare a brief summary of the application (as a separate document) to help introduce and describe the application to the review panel to guide the discussion.

## SCORING

In scoring each of the core criteria and impact/priority, reviewers will use a scale of whole numbers, ranging from 1 to 9 (1= exceptional; 9= poor). The SRO will provide additional guidance on the use of this scoring scale.

Before the review meeting, determine a separate score for each of the core review criteria and a score for the impact/priority. The impact/priority score should reflect your overall evaluation rather than a weighted average applied to scores given to each criterion. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field. Please do not enter the score on your critique template.

## PARTS OF THE TEMPLATE

### Overall Impact

After considering all of the review criteria, briefly summarize the significant strengths and weaknesses of the application and state the likelihood of the project to exert a sustained powerful influence on the field.

Enter your overall impact/priority score *into IAR*. **Do not record your overall score on the critique template.** Your individual score on the overall impact/priority will not appear in the summary statement if you do not enter it on the critique template. Instead, your score for the overall impact/priority will be averaged with scores from the other review committee members, and the average will be reported on the summary statement.

### Scored Review Criteria

Reviewers will assign scores to the Core Review Criteria. Please see Table 1 of this document for a list of scored review criteria for different types of applications. Enter your scores for each of the core review criteria *into IAR*. **Do not record your scores on the critique template;** scores will be added automatically to the summary statement when it is generated within IAR. The criterion scores that you assign to the application will appear in the summary statement along with your critique.

### Additional Review Criteria

Reviewers will not assign individual scores to additional review criteria, but will consider them when assigning overall impact/priority scores. Choose the appropriate selection from the drop-down list for each additional review consideration and comment as required. Additional review criteria may include:

- protection of human subjects;
- inclusion of women, minorities, and children;
- vertebrate animal welfare; and
- protections from biohazards.

Please see Table 1 of this document for the list of additional review criteria for different types of applications.

### Additional Review Considerations

Reviewers will not assign individual scores to additional review considerations and will not consider them in assigning the impact/priority scores. Choose the appropriate selection from the drop-down list for each additional review consideration and comment as required. Reviewer comments on additional review considerations will be considered by program staff when making funding decisions and determining funding levels. Additional review considerations can include:

- budget;
- select agent research; and/or
- resource sharing plans.

Please see Table 1 of this document for a list of additional review considerations for different types of applications.

## **Not Discussed and Not Recommended for Further Consideration**

Applications judged unanimously by the peer reviewers as less competitive, based on preliminary impact/priority scores (roughly the bottom half of applications for that review meeting), will not be discussed and will not receive a final impact/priority score. Although the summary statement for such an application will indicate "ND" (not discussed), it will contain critiques and criteria scores from each of the assigned reviewers.

An application may be designated Not Recommended for Further Consideration (NRFC) by the Scientific Review Group if it: lacks significant and substantial merit; presents serious ethical problems in the protection of human subjects from research risks; or presents serious ethical problems in the use of vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents. Applications designated as NRFC do not proceed to the second level of peer review (National Advisory Council/Board) because they cannot be funded.

## **Additional Comments to Applicants**

Reviewers may provide guidance to the applicant or recommend against resubmission without fundamental revision. Strengths and weaknesses that do not affect your determination of the overall impact may be included in the Additional Comments to Applicant section. Please **do not include** major strengths and weaknesses that affect your determination of the overall impact.

**TABLE 1: REVIEW CRITERIA AND CONSIDERATIONS AT A GLANCE**

	Research (R, DP, RC, P) Cooperative Agreement (U) Center (C) SBIR/STTR (R41, R42, R43, R44)	Fellowship (F)	Career Development (K)	Institutional Training (T)	Shared Instrumentation (S10)
<p><b>Scored Review Criteria</b></p> <p>(Scored individually and considered in overall impact/priority score)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significance</li> <li>Investigator(s)</li> <li>Innovation</li> <li>Approach</li> <li>Environment</li> </ul> <p>PAR &amp; RFA: May add questions to each criterion or additional criteria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FOA-specific</li> <li>Not given individual criterion scores</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidate</li> <li>Sponsor &amp; Training Environment</li> <li>Research Training Proposal/Plan</li> <li>Training Potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Candidate</li> <li>Career Development Plan/Career Goals &amp; Objectives/Plan to Provide Mentoring</li> <li>Research Plan</li> <li>Mentor(s), Co-Mentor(s), Consultant(s), Collaborator(s)</li> <li>Environment &amp; Institutional Commitment to the Candidate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training Program &amp; Environment</li> <li>Training PD/PI</li> <li>Preceptors /Mentors</li> <li>Trainees</li> <li>Training Record</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Justification of Need</li> <li>Technical Expertise</li> <li>Research Projects</li> <li>Administration</li> <li>Institutional Commitment</li> <li>Overall Benefit (not scored)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Review Criteria</b></p> <p>(Not scored Individually, but considered in overall impact/priority score)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protections for Human Subjects</li> <li>Inclusion of Women, Minorities, &amp; Children</li> <li>Vertebrate Animals</li> <li>Biohazards</li> <li>Resubmission Applications</li> <li>Renewal Applications</li> <li>Revision Applications</li> </ul> <p>R01-BRP only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partnership and Leadership</li> </ul> <p>SBIR/STTR only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase II Criteria</li> <li>Phase II Competing Renewal Criteria</li> <li>Fast Track Criteria</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protections for Human Subjects</li> <li>Inclusion of Women, Minorities, &amp; Children</li> <li>Vertebrate Animals</li> <li>Biohazards</li> <li>Resubmission Applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research</li> <li>Protection of Human Subjects from Research Risk</li> <li>Inclusion of Women, Minorities &amp; Children in Research</li> <li>Vertebrate Animals</li> <li>Biohazards</li> <li>Resubmission Applications</li> <li>Renewal Applications/Progress Assessment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Protections for Human Subjects</li> <li>Inclusion of Women, Minorities, &amp; Children</li> <li>Vertebrate Animals</li> <li>Biohazards</li> <li>Resubmission Applications</li> <li>Renewal Applications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resubmission Applications</li> </ul> <p>HEI S10 only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Biohazards</li> </ul>
<p><b>Additional Review Considerations</b></p> <p>(Not scored individually and not considered in overall score; can be SRO Administrative Note)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget &amp; Period Support</li> <li>Select Agents</li> <li>Applications from Foreign Organizations (N/A for SBIR/STTR)</li> <li>Resource Sharing Plans</li> </ul> <p>R01-BRP only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Technology Transfer</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Responsible Conduct of Research</li> <li>Budget &amp; Period of Support</li> <li>Foreign Training</li> <li>Resource Sharing Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget &amp; Period of Support</li> <li>Select Agents</li> <li>Resource Sharing Plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget</li> <li>Recruitment &amp; Retention Plan to Enhance Diversity</li> <li>Training in the Responsible Conduct of Research</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Budget &amp; Period of Support</li> </ul>