



What Happens to Your Grant Application A Primer for New Applicants

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) receives all NIH and some other Public Health Service grant applications. Most investigator-initiated applications for NIH funds are referred to CSR review groups.

Your application is assigned to a review group and an NIH Institute or Center

One or more CSR Referral Officers examine your application and determine the most appropriate Integrated Review Group (IRG) to assess its scientific and technical merit. Your application is then assigned to one of the IRG's study sections. A study section typically includes 20 or more scientists from the community of productive researchers. Your application also will be assigned to the NIH Institute or Center (IC) best suited to fund your application should it have sufficient merit. (More than one IC may be assigned if appropriate.)

Referral Officers follow established guidelines that define the review boundaries of each study section. These boundaries frequently overlap, and more than one study section may have the expertise to review your application. You may request in a cover note with your application that it be assigned to a particular study section or IC. The CSR referral office seriously considers such requests.

The combined expertise of the scientists in a study section is intended to span the breadth and diversity of the science it covers. CSR may recruit temporary reviewers or secure mail reviews from outside consultants.



One of CSR's Referral Officers, who help assign applications to the right review groups and ICs. CSR expects to soon use text-fingerprinting software to help speed referrals.

Checking the status of your application

As soon as your application is received and assigned to a study section, notices are posted to your online NIH Commons account. Information on the Commons and how to register is available at <https://commons.era.nih.gov/commons>. You may question either your study section or IC assignment by contacting the Scientific Review Officer (SRO) (previously called Scientific Review Administrator [SRA]) named in your notification or the CSR referral office (301-435-0715). It usually takes weeks to refer the thousands of applications submitted each round. If a notice is not posted in your Commons account within 3 weeks of the submission date, you should contact the referral office.

Reviewers are identified



Some of about 18,000 scientists who review NIH grant applications at CSR.

Your SRO will analyze the content of your application, check for completeness, and decide which reviewers can best evaluate it. Reviewers receive a copy of your application approximately 6 weeks before their meeting. Each application is assigned to three reviewers, and at least two of them provide written critiques. These assigned reviewers lead the discussions at the meeting.

Because of the multi-month period between submission and review, applicants often wish to submit additional materials. Before you do, you should contact your SRO to see if this is possible and what kinds of limitations apply.

Before the study section meets, reviewers confidentially submit preliminary critiques and scores to CSR. Reviewers are then given a list of applications that were initially scored in the lower half. If all reviewers agree, these applications are “streamlined,” which means they will not be discussed at the meeting. “Streamlining” is not equivalent to disapproval, so applicants may resubmit a better application after considering the critiques they receive.

The review meeting is convened

Study sections convene for 1 to 2 days. One member serves as chair and conducts the meeting with the SRO. Relevant NIH extramural staff are encouraged to attend, but they may not participate in the evaluation. Assigned reviewers and discussants present their evaluations and outside opinions are read. After a general discussion, reviewers mark their priority scores privately on scoring sheets, which are later tabulated by CSR.



A typical CSR study section meeting. CSR also convenes online meetings when they are a way to recruit the best reviewers.

The results are released to you

Within a few days after the meeting, your priority score and percentile ranking is available to you via the NIH Commons. Within a month, your summary statement will be available via your NIH Commons account. It will include (1) the written critiques produced by the assigned reviewers, (2) the SRO’s summary of the study section’s discussion, (3) study section recommendations, and (4) administrative notes of special consideration. For new investigators submitting R01 applications, this information is posted within 10 days after the meeting.

The assigned NIH Institute or Center takes charge

After the review, an IC program officer will be your main point of contact. He or she may help interpret your review results or answer questions about the further consideration of your application. In a second level of peer review, IC Advisory Councils may consider the study section’s recommendations and determine the relevance of your proposed research to IC priorities and public health needs.

<p>View the Video!</p> <p>Inside the NIH Grant Review Process</p> <p>CSR has produced a video of a mock study section meeting to provide another inside look at how NIH grant applications are reviewed for scientific and technical merit.</p> <p>View the video via the Web:</p> <p>http://www.csr.nih.gov/Video/Video.asp</p>	<p>Learn More About CSR</p> <p>CSR organizes peer review groups that evaluate three quarters of the grant applications submitted to NIH. CSR also receives all NIH and many Public Health Service grant applications and assigns them to the appropriate NIH Institutes and Centers and PHS agencies.</p> <p>Visit our Web site or call for more information:</p> <p>http://www.csr.nih.gov 301 435-1115</p>
<p>Grant Info</p> <p>Get info on funding opportunities, application forms, instructions and policies from the NIH Office of Extramural Research: http://www.grants.nih.gov.</p>	