

PEER REVIEW NOTES

September 2004

Flat Rate Reimbursements for Reviewers

CSR is working with the NIH Office of Management Assessment to start issuing flat rate reimbursements to reviewers who serve on our peer review groups sometime next year. Under the new system, reviewers will no longer need to keep and submit receipts for meals, hotels, taxis, etc. Reviewers simply will receive a standard reimbursement for each day they serve at a review meeting. Reimbursements will likely be deposited directly into reviewers' bank accounts just a few days after the meeting, once service is confirmed by the Scientific Review Administrator (SRA). This new system will thus make life easier for reviewers and make the process more efficient for NIH.

In the meantime, the Government has reduced the lodging per diem rate for the Washington, D.C., area from \$150 to \$143 (excluding taxes) as of Oct. 1, 2004. We do not expect to ask reviewers to make up the difference if the hotels do not accept the reduced rate. CSR will honor its hotel contracts made at the higher rate and reimburse reviewers accordingly. Hotels are expected to accept the lower rate in the new fiscal year.

Applications Are Up But Not as Steeply as Last Year

NIH continues to receive record numbers of applications, but the trajectory of the increase this year is not nearly as steep as last year. Through July 2004, CSR received 66,637 applications in this fiscal year, which ends September 31, 2004. This number represents a 7.4% increase over the same time period last year. In fiscal year 2003, NIH experienced a staggering 24% increase in the number of applications received over the previous fiscal year. During the past several years, the rate of increase in applications received through July in one fiscal year is an excellent indicator of the overall increase observed for the entire fiscal year.

Do these data suggest a new dynamic and an end to unprecedented percent increases in the numbers of applications that NIH has received over the past several years? In short, we do not know. NIH's budget growth is expected to sharply decelerate this year, and the influence this will have on application numbers is difficult to predict. With tightening paylines, the numbers of amended applications coming back into the system for re-review are likely to increase, at least in the short term. The wildcard in the equation is investigator behavior in response to tightening paylines. It is unclear if investigators will generally focus their efforts on just one application—which might offset the increased workload created by amended applications coming back for re-review—or if they will submit multiple applications focusing on different areas as a strategy to "hit" a payline.

CSR Launches a New Series of Reviewer Stories

Each year, over 12,000 leading researchers from the community serve on CSR study sections to review the many more grant applications submitted to NIH. Together, these individuals have thousands of years of experience helping NIH identify the most promising grant applications. We want to share some of their stories so more people can know about the dedicated people on our scientific review groups. We also hope to highlight their insights into the process and what makes for a good application. Applicants may learn how to produce better grant applications, and reviewers—particularly new ones—may learn how to produce more useful critiques.

"Physician on Call" is the first Reviewer Story, which begins as Dr. Kevin Olden flies home from a review meeting only to find his job is not done for the day. A medical emergency on the plane presents him with a most unusual case for a physician who completed residencies in both internal medicine and psychiatry. To read his story, go to http://www.csr.nih.gov/Reviewer_stories/Reviewerstories.asp

CSR's Reaches Out to the Community with New Meeting Exhibit

CSR has developed a new exhibit booth to expand its outreach to applicants and reviewers at professional and scientific meetings. The booth incorporates an LCD monitor, allowing CSR to keep its exhibit fresh and up to date with minimal cost. The exhibit currently displays the "Images of Peer Review" photo survey by Dr. Michael Lang (a professional photographer and CSR SRA). These photos represent the NIH initial peer review process and feature reviewers in action—presenting reviews and discussing applications (see http://www.csr.nih.gov/NewsFlash/Images_of_Peer_Review.pdf). Information available at the booth includes brochures on the peer review process and CSR employment and training opportunities.

Over the next year, CSR plans to exhibit the booth at meetings of the following organizations: Society for Neuroscience, American Public Health Association, American Society for Cell Biology, FASEB Experimental Biology, Association for Research in Vision and Ophthalmology, The Endocrine Society, American Diabetes Association, and the American Psychological Association. CSR SRAs and senior staff will be on hand at different times to discuss the NIH peer review process and to respond to questions.

CSR's Reorganization Nears Completion

In October/November 2004, CSR will enter its fifth and final implementation cycle for Integrated Review Groups (IRGs) restructured under the Panel on Scientific Boundaries for Review (PSBR) reorganization. During this review round, 15 new study sections within the new Genes, Genomes and Genetics (GGG) and the reorganized Infectious Diseases and Microbiology (IDM) IRGs will hold their first study section meetings.

Last Provisional Rosters and IRG Descriptions Posted

CSR will reach a major milestone in October 2004. Application receipts will begin for the new Biological Chemistry and Macromolecular Biophysics (BCMB) and Cell Biology (CB) IRGs, the last of our IRGs to be implemented under PSBR. In February/March 2005, our implementation phase will conclude with the first study sections meetings for these groups. The guidelines for the BCMB and CB IRGs are available on CSR's IRG Description Web page (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/review/irgdesc.htm>). Provisional rosters for these groups are available on the PSBR Implementation Timeline (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/events/timeline.htm>) and CSR's Roster Index (<http://www.csr.nih.gov/Committees/rosterindex.asp>) Web pages.

Progress to Date

Over four previous rounds of IRG implementations, CSR held first meetings for 71 new study sections within 12 of the 16 reorganized IRGs: Hematology (HEME); Biology of Development and Aging (BDA); Musculoskeletal, Oral and Skin Sciences (MOSS); Oncological Sciences (ONC); Bioengineering Sciences and Technologies (BST); Cardiovascular Sciences (CVS); Digestive Sciences (DIG); Renal and Urological Sciences (RUS); Respiratory Sciences (RES); Endocrinology, Metabolism, Nutrition and Reproductive Sciences (EMNR); Immunology (IMM); and Surgical Sciences, Biomedical Imaging and Bioengineering (SBIB) IRGs. For more information on CSR's reorganization activities, please visit <http://www.csr.nih.gov/review/reorgact.asp>.