

Selection Criteria for NIH Advisory Committees

Thank you for your interest in NIH advisory committees. The basic criterion for membership on NIH committees is excellence in biomedical and behavioral research and, for public members, a demonstrated, active interest in the mission of the committee. The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) and a number of Federal regulations and policies govern NIH's use and management of its advisory committees. The FACA requires that membership be fairly balanced in terms of points of view represented and the functions to be performed by the advisory committee. NIH ensures representation of women and minorities, diverse representation in member expertise, as well as broad representation of members from different geographic regions of the United States. There are often other membership requirements for specific committees based on legislation, regulations, or policies.

Members of NIH's scientific and technical peer review committees review grant applications and contract proposals. NIH peer review committees are not policy-driven committees and do not influence the direction of Government policy. Their major focus is to determine the scientific merit of grant applications and contract proposals. Members of these committees are selected based on expertise in the particular scientific areas for which a committee has review responsibilities. A principal requirement for serving on a scientific and technical peer review committee is competence as an independent investigator in a scientific or clinical discipline or research specialty. Assessment of this competence is based on the quality of research accomplishments, publications in scientific journals, and other significant scientific activities, achievements, and honors. Usually a doctoral degree or its equivalent is required. Nonscientific members of the public may serve on scientific and technical review committees when their expertise or experience is appropriate.

Service on NIH advisory committees also demands mature judgment, balanced perspective, objectivity, ability to work effectively in a group. Membership requirements also include a commitment to accomplish work assignments, assurance that the confidentiality of applications, proposals, discussions, and recommendations will be protected and certification acknowledging they are free from conflicts of interest.

National advisory councils and program advisory committees provide the broad perspective that is essential to balanced and effective programs, including awareness of and insight into the roles of various institutions engaged in biomedical research and knowledge of what may best serve the health needs of the American people and the world. Members of national advisory councils and program advisory committees are selected for their competence, interest, and knowledge in the specific Institute, Center, or OD office mission. National advisory councils are composed of outstanding leaders, and other members of the public, with demonstrated interests in the health program areas of the particular Institute or Center. They include not only biomedical, behavioral, social and public health scientists but also leaders in such fields as law, economics, management, health policy, and public policy. Patients, relatives of patients, and advocates who represent the concerns of the community may also be asked to serve on the committee. The membership criteria required by law for most advisory councils consist of two-thirds scientific

and one-third public representatives. This mix of members brings to the review and award process diverse knowledge and expertise in the relevant programmatic areas.

The nomination and selection of members is a major professional responsibility of each advisory committee's manager. The selection process involves long-range planning, and obtaining suggestions and information from many different sources. NIH draws upon numerous resources to select suitable nominees for membership, such as:

- a.) personal knowledge of both the required discipline and the scientists who are making significant research contributions to the field;
- b.) review of NIH applicant and grantee files as well as curriculum vitae and publications of investigators;
- c.) review of NIH's enterprise-wide database system and other databases for potential nominees with specific expertise;
- d.) review of major scientific journals and publications in the field;
- e.) attendance at relevant professional meetings, these meetings provide a valuable method of keeping informed of significant new studies in the field and of identifying the investigators who are doing the type of research needed; gaining knowledge of the interests and expertise of possible future members and consulting with eminent investigators who may be potential members;
- f.) observance of investigators who serve as ad hoc consultants or temporary members at regular scientific and technical peer review committee meetings, and participants on project site visit teams; or those who have provided written collateral opinions on request;
- g.) solicitation of names in the Federal Register;
- h.) solicitation of names of outstanding investigators from former and current committee members and other leaders in the field;
- i.) consultation with scientific and professional staff of the various NIH Institutes and Centers as well as the Office of the Director offices;
- j.) observation of applications reviewed by other agencies, especially those having review panels in related disciplines;
- k.) review of membership rosters of pertinent professional societies; and
- l.) self-nominations from qualified individuals.

NIH's advisory committees perform a unique service to the NIH and to the Department of Health and Human Services. Members are an integral part of the peer review process and provide invaluable expertise and recommendations to national advisory councils and program advisory committees. NIH provides remuneration to its committee members for these services during the days they participate in meetings. This includes honoraria, plus meal and travel expenses based on Government travel guidelines and rates.

You may nominate yourself based on the criteria discussed in this document or nominate other individuals based on their scientific expertise, experience or interest.

Please submit curriculum vitae(s) (CV) or resumes to:

Ms. Jennifer Spaeth
Director
Office of Federal Advisory Committee Policy
6701 Democracy Blvd
Suite 1000
Bethesda, MD 20892-4875

You may also e-mail her at: spaethj@od.nih.gov