ENHANCING PEER REVIEW:
Overview of Implementation for Reviewers

Background

Goals of Peer Review Enhancements

- Recognize changing nature of research; identify and encourage new and early stage investigators; ease burden on research enterprise; and streamline time to award
- Fund the best science, by the best scientists, with the least amount of administrative burden

Year-long Deliberative Effort Gathering Feedback & Input:

- Request for Information, NIH Staff survey, IC White Papers, Internal Town Hall Meetings, External Consultation Meetings, Data Analysis, Internal and External Working Groups

Policy Changes Already in Place

New Policy on Resubmissions

- NIH will accept only a single amendment to all applications.
  - Success rates of new and resubmitted applications should be enhanced by decreasing the number of allowed grant application resubmissions (amendments) from two to one

New Investigator (NI) and Early Stage Investigator (ESI) Policy

- NIH will support New Investigator (NI) R01 awards at success rates comparable to those for established investigators submitting new R01 applications
  - Goal is to encourage transition to independence for investigators and counter trend of increasing time spent in training phase of career
- Strongly encourages NIs/ESIs to apply for R01 grants when seeking first-time NIH funding
- The majority of NIs supported in a given fiscal year are expected to be ESIs

Review Changes Happening Now (May 2009 Review Meetings)

Changes to Review

- Enhanced Review Criteria, Templates for Structured Critiques, Scoring of Individual Review Criteria, New 1-9 Scoring Scale, Clustering of NI/ESI and clinical applications for review
  - Clearer understanding by applicants of the basis of application ratings by reviewers
  - More emphasis on impact and less emphasis on technical details
  - Succinct, well-focused critiques that evaluate, rather than describe, applications
  - Routine use of the entire rating scale

Before the Review Meeting

Reading Applications

Assigned Reviewers Should:
- Address all applicable criteria and other review considerations
- Identify major strengths and weaknesses
- Assign scores to each of the 5 "core" criteria
- Assign an overall impact/priority score

Preparation of Critiques

Assigned Reviewers Should:
- List major strengths and weaknesses that influenced the overall impact/priority score
- Use bulleted points to make succinct, focused comments
- Limit text to ¼ page per criterion
- Use review critique templates

Scoring of Individual Review Criteria

- There are 5 core criteria for most types of grant applications.
- Use the new 9-point scale (1 = exceptional, 9 = poor) to score the five core review criteria.

Overall Impact/Priority Scores

Assigned Reviewers Should:
- Consider criterion strengths and weaknesses of each application in determining an overall impact/priority score
- Recognize this is a NEW scoring system and focus on the guidelines for its use
- Take advantage of this unique opportunity to use the entire 1 to 9 range

Before Attending the Review Meeting

Assigned Reviewers Should:
- Post critiques, criterion scores, and overall score to the Internet-Assisted Review (IAR) Web site
- IAR tutorials and documentation are available on the Enhancing Peer Review Web site

At the Review Meeting

- Preliminary impact/priority scores will help determine which applications are discussed
- Assigned reviewers will discuss strengths and weaknesses of each application
    - Recommend overall impact/priority score
    - Criterion scores generally will not be discussed by the committee
- All eligible members will record an overall impact/priority score (*as is presently true*)

After the Review Meeting

- Assigned reviewers whose opinions changed as a result of discussion at the meeting should use IAR to modify their criterion scores and post revised critiques

Summary Statements

- Overall impact/priority scores of discussed applications will be the average of scores voted by all eligible reviewers, multiplied by 10 (final scores will range from 10-90, in whole numbers)
- Summary statements for ALL applications will include the criterion scores and critiques posted by assigned reviewers

Application Changes Happening Later (January 2010 Submission Dates)

- Realignment of the application with review criteria
- Shorter applications (application length changes have already begun in select pilots and Recovery Act initiatives)