ENHANCING PEER REVIEW:
Overview of Implementation for Applicants

Background

NIH Peer Review System

- Cornerstone of the NIH Extramural Mission
- Standard of Excellence Worldwide
- Collaboration between NIH Extramural Staff and Scientific Community

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:

- Requests 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

- Goals of policy
  - Funds meritorious science earlier
  - Enhances success rates of new and resubmitted applications by decreasing the number of allowed grant application resubmissions (amendments) from two to one
- For January 25, 2009 due dates and beyond, NIH will accept only a single amendment to the original application
  - Applies to original new applications (i.e., never submitted) and competing renewal applications
  - No time limit between the submission of the original and subsequent A1
  - Failure to receive funding after two submissions (i.e. original and single amendment) means the applicant should substantially re-design the project rather than simply change the application in response to previous reviews
- Original new or competing renewal applications for FY 2009 or prior year funding consideration will be permitted two amendments (A1 and A2)
  - A2 applications from these "grandfathered" applications must be submitted no later than January 7, 2011

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

- Goals of policy
  - Encourages transition to independence for investigators
  - Counters trend of increasing time spent in training phase of career
  - Strongly encourages NI/ESIs to apply for R01 grants when seeking first-time NIH funding

- NIs are individuals who have not competed successfully for *significant* NIH research grant support
    - ESIs are NIs who are within 10 years of receiving their terminal research degree or completing medical residency
    - Extensions to the 10 year period are possible
- NIH will support NI R01 awards at success rates comparable to those for established investigators submitting new R01 applications
    - The majority of NIs supported in a given fiscal year are expected to be ESIs
    - All NIs should update their eRA Commons profiles to see their NI/ESI eligibility displayed
    - NIH will identify NI and ESI grant applications based on information from eRA Commons

Changes Happening Now (May 2009 Review Meetings)

New 1-9 Scoring System

- The new scoring system will use a 9-point scale (1 = exceptional and 9 = poor)
- This scale will be used for overall impact/priority scores AND for individual criterion scores
- Preliminary impact/priority scores will help determine which applications are discussed

Scoring of Individual Core Criteria and Overall Impact/Priority

- Assigned reviewers will use the 9-point scale for core review criteria
    - Each assigned reviewer's criterion scores will be reported in the summary statement
    - Criterion scores will be reported for ALL applications
- Core review criteria and additional review criteria will be used by the primary reviewer and discussant(s) to establish a preliminary overall impact score
- An application does not need to be strong in all five core review criteria to be judged as likely to have major scientific impact
- All eligible reviewers will score each application
    - Overall Impact/Priority score is the average of the scores from all eligible reviewers, multiplied by 10 (ranges from 10 to 90)
- Applications that are not discussed *will not* receive an overall impact score

Summary Statements

- Will include critiques from assigned reviewers
    - Comments will be in the form of bullet points or short narratives
- Will include criterion scores from assigned reviewers
- All discussed applications will include a final overall impact/priority score

Application Changes Happening Later (January 2010 Submission Dates)

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