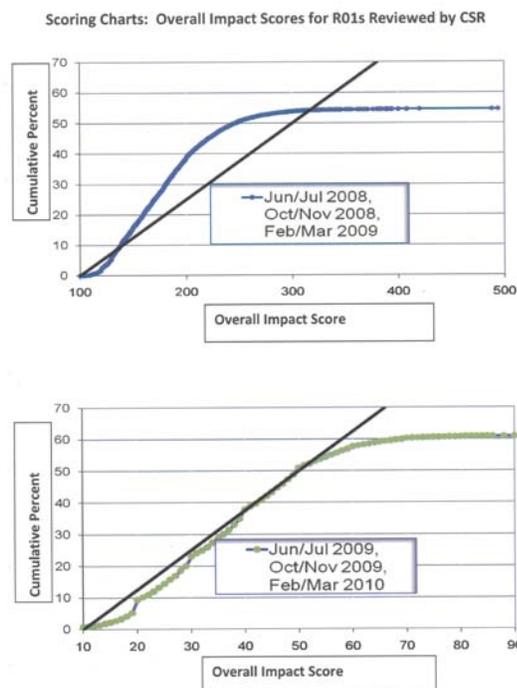


How Is the New Scoring System Working?

It was a bold move to change the number of scoring bins reviewers could use in evaluating NIH grant applications from 41 to 9. Many were concerned, despite the fact this change came from long deliberations of external and internal working groups.



“Many thought we’d see more score compression,” said CSR Director Toni Scarpa. “But the opposite occurred. Our reviewers really mastered the new system quickly.”

Looking at the data: We plotted final impact/priority scores from comparative sets of applications for three review rounds before and three rounds after we started using 1-9 scoring in June 2009. Reviewers who reviewed 27,000 R01 applications with the old scoring scale compressed their scores around perceived funding levels. The same sigmoidal curve did not appear when we plotted the scores from reviewers reviewing 30,000 R01 applications with the new scoring scale. There was far less compression.

CSR will remain vigilant: SROs will continue to encourage reviewers to score according to the new instructions, with a score of 1 as exceptional. We looked at the distribution of scores for last fall and this past winter, and the curve was essentially the same. We’ll continue to monitor scores and take action as necessary to ensure they provide the discernment NIH needs to fund the best research.

This news comes from the [May 2010 Peer Review Notes newsletter](#).

About CSR

CSR organizes the peer review groups that evaluate the majority of grant applications submitted to NIH. These groups include experienced and respected researchers from across the country and abroad. Since 1946, CSR’s mission has been to see that NIH grant applications receive fair, independent, expert, and timely reviews — free from inappropriate influences — so NIH can fund the most promising research. CSR also receives all incoming applications and assigns them to the NIH institutes and centers that fund grants. For more information, go to CSR’s Web site—<http://www.csr.nih.gov>—or phone 301-435-1111.

About NIH

NIH — the Nation’s Medical Research Agency — includes 27 Institutes and Centers and is a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It is the primary federal agency for conducting and supporting basic, clinical and translational medical research, and it investigates the causes, treatments, and cures for both common and rare diseases. For more information about NIH and its programs, visit www.nih.gov.