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New CSR Director Seeks Community Engagement

The new Director of the NIH Center for Scientific Review, Dr. Noni Byrnes, invites you to learn about important initiatives to advance NIH peer review and to give us feedback via three new CSR social media platforms:

- Review Matters blog
- Twitter
- Facebook

We will use the Review Matters blog to share important news and information for reviewers and applicants. In her first blog post, Dr. Byrnes outlined her initial priorities and affirmed her commitment to strengthen the NIH peer review process in transparent and data-driven ways that rely on significant community involvement.

We will more actively use our Twitter and Facebook pages to share critical information as well as other helpful news, guidance and reminders for both reviewers and applicants. These new platforms will replace the Peer Review Notes.

NIH Director Dr. Francis Collins named Dr. Byrnes CSR Director on February 14, 2019.
What Reviewers Need to Know About Submitting Late Applications

One of the benefits of serving on an NIH review group is that there are two policies that may allow you to submit your applications late. But both policies don’t apply to all reviewers or all applications.

If you get the policies mixed up, we may have to withdraw your application. This is the last thing we want to do.

To help you take advantage of your benefits and help prevent this from happening, we created the following benefits table for our late application policies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NIH Late Policy Benefits for Reviewers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>NIH Late Policy for a 2-Week Extension for Some Applications</strong> (NOT-OD-15-039)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must be listed as PI or MPI.</td>
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<tr>
<td>You earn eligibility by serving in a qualifying NIH review meeting occurring 2 months before or after an application due date.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifying NIH Meetings:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Study sections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special emphasis panels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• National advisory councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Boards of scientific counselors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Program advisory committees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applies to all activity codes and all types of funding opportunity announcements, <strong>EXCEPT</strong> for RFAs that specifically opt out -- language in Application Due Date field will read “no</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
late applications accepted for this funding opportunity announcement.”

Applications to all other activity codes may be submitted late, but they follow the guidelines and submission deadlines in the NIH Late Policy (see left).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You Must Submit a Cover Letter with your application that explains your service.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>You must submit eligible applications within two weeks of the application due date.</strong></td>
<td><strong>You can submit eligible applications at any time, but your application will be assigned a council round based on the receipt intervals described in NIH Guide Notices listed above.</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Example:** If the application is due on February 5, 2019, the late application must be received, error-free, no later than February 19, 2019.

**Example:** If the application is due on February 5, 2019, it may be submitted and assigned to October 2019 council if it is received, error-free, by April 16, 2019.

| Your application is processed and assigned for review following the same guidelines and procedures as applications received for the actual due date. | Your application may be assigned to a study section or special emphasis panel -- at the discretion of review staff. |

**New Video: What You Need to Know about NIH Application Submission and Assignment**

Want to put your best foot forward when submitting your NIH application? Check out CSR’s new video that covers the latest options and policies to help you guide your application through the submission and assignment processes: [What You Need to Know about NIH Application and Assignment](#).

**The Video Specifically Covers:**

**How to navigate the application submission process by finding a---**

- Funding Opportunity Announcement you need to apply for a grant
- NIH Institute or Center that might fund your research
• Program Officer who can provide helpful guidance

**How to navigate the application assignment process by—**

• Finding a CSR review group for your application
• Requesting a particular review group or funding Institute or Center
• Identifying reviewers who may be in conflict with your application
• Naming areas of expertise needed to review your application
• Using a cover letter to convey other critical information

[View More Applicant Videos](#)

**Peer Education about Peer Review**

CSR is creating materials to make peer education about peer review easier. But before going too far, we’d like to hear from you.

Many experienced reviewers have told us that they conduct, or are interested in conducting, talks on NIH peer review for colleagues, especially early career colleagues, at their institutions.

CSR favors such efforts in the belief that understanding the peer review process allows applicants to write better applications. Applications with strong ideas can really shine if they avoid errors of grantsmanship, reflect current NIH review policies and practices, address key review criteria, and clearly provide reviewers the information they need. CSR believes that better applications will lead to better review outcomes and, ultimately, to better science. Improving knowledge of peer review can help.

**CSR is looking for your ideas to help us provide the most useful resources to you. We’re specifically wondering . . .**

• What additional information would make the talks you provide easier and/or better?
• Would an annotated slide deck for “NIH Peer Review 101” be helpful?
• What about specialized slide sets for the review of fellowship or SBIR/STTR applications?
• Would slides and background information on NIH rigor and reproducibility policy in review be helpful?
• What other materials would be useful? Handouts? Videos?
Email your thoughts to CSRoutreach@nih.gov. Or feel free to share your thoughts in the comment section below.

Website to Find an NIH Institute Most Interested in Funding Your Work

To maximize your chances of getting a grant, you need to get your application to one or more NIH Institute/Center (IC) most interested in funding your work.

Many times, it is very clear which IC(s) are a good match for your science. However, when in doubt, you can turn to NIH’s RePORTER database of funded grants to help you think through the possibilities.

NIH RePORTER offers a very useful tool called Matchmaker, which will make a potential match between the abstract or specific aims of your application and ICs that have funded similar applications.

How to Find a Program Officer

You also can run the same search to identify program officers who have similar applications in their portfolios. This is important because IC funding priorities shift over time.

Before you submit your application, we strongly recommend that you discuss your science with program officers at the IC(s) who can advise you whether it is a good fit for their funding priorities or not.

How to Find a Study Section

Matchmaker can point you toward an appropriate review group for your application. However, the best way to identify the right CSR study section for your application is to use our Assisted Referral Tool.

**Note: You don’t have to tell us your assignment preferences.** Our scientists can use their deep knowledge of the NIH ICs and CSR study sections to make appropriate assignments for you.
Tool to Find a CSR Study Section

Curious about where your application might be reviewed, and want to have a look at those study sections and their rosters to see if you have a preference for review in one group over another?

Our online Assisted Referral Tool (ART) will make a potential match between the science in your application and an appropriate CSR study section(s).

How ART Works

- Enter your application summary or specific aims into ART.
- See both strong and potential matches to our study sections.
- Get direct links to review group descriptions and rosters.
- Know your query is confidential. No input text from your application or the fingerprint generated during the search will be retained.

ART makes fact-based recommendations by matching a fingerprint of your application information with a database of applications reviewed in each study section.

How to Suggest a Study Section

Preferences for study section or Institute assignments should be submitted on the optional PHS Assignment Request form, which is found with the other optional forms in each application packet.

CSR will always consider your assignment preferences. Please know our ability to honor them depends on which Institutes or Centers participate in your funding opportunity announcement and on the review location agreements within NIH and other PHS agencies. Our ultimate goal is to see that your application gets a high-quality peer review, so we will work to assign your application to a study section best able to review your science.

Try It -- https://art.csr.nih.gov/ART/selection.jsp

User Feedback

"ART was easy to use, worked well, and returned results quickly."

"The tool appears to be accurate and robust."
Form to Guide the Assignment and Review of Your Application

NIH now uses an electronic form -- the Assignment Request Form -- to help you better convey assignment requests and other information you may want to give us before we review your grant application. We made this change to speed up and more accurately process your applications, since extracting assignment preferences and review information from cover letters took time and could easily produce errors.

What Do I Include in the New Assignment Request Form?

- Preferences for assignment to (or not to) specific Institutes/Centers
- Preferences for assignment to (or not to) specific review groups
- Brief lists of people who might be in conflict with your application (and why)
- Types of expertise needed to review your application

What Do I Need to Know About the Form?

- All assignment preferences must now be communicated via this form.
- The form is optional and can be found with the other optional forms in the application packet
- If you use the form, you do not need to include more than a single request
- This is a form page and not an attachment, so it does not need to be uploaded and attached to the application like a cover letter PDF.
- Information you submit is kept confidential and only staff with a need to know can see it.

When Do I Still Need to Attach a Cover Letter to My Application?

Use a cover letter if you need to send us:

- Reasons why your application may have been submitted late
- Information about any videos that you may provide as post-submission materials
- A statement that the proposed studies will generate large-scale human/non-human genomic data
- Special agency approvals such as $500k or conference grant approvals
- Special information about subaward budgets
Cover letters also are kept confidential and only staff with a need to know can see them.

If you submit a cover letter, you should not add an assignment or review request to it. The new Assignment Request Form is the only way to submit these requests.

Learn More

- [Assignment Request Form](#)
- [Convey Assignment Request and Other Review/Assignment Information to NIH](#)

Send comments or questions: PRN@csr.nih.gov

Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services