NIH Center for
Scientific Review

Communications & Outreach Initiatives
28 March 2022

Kristin Kramer, Ph.D.
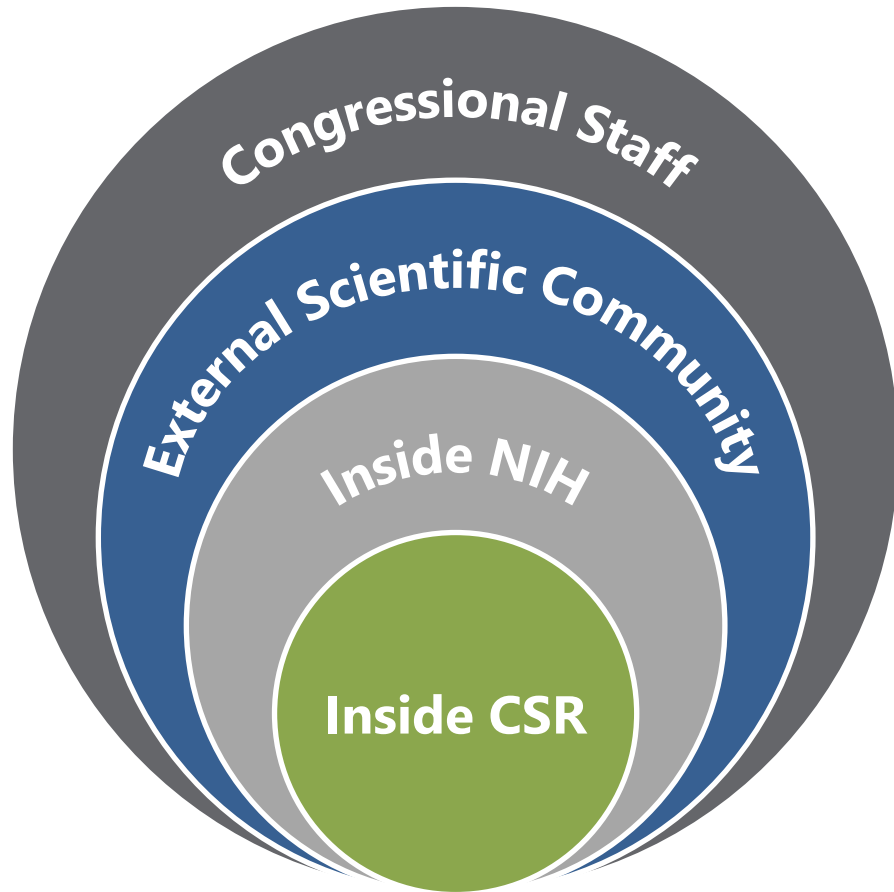Director, Office of Communications & Outreach

Our Goals

- Increase transparency
- Facilitate stakeholder input

What do we hope to gain?

- Level playing field through equal access to information
- Increased trust
- Improvements – in the peer review process, in workplace culture…

Who are our audiences?

Congressional Staff

External Scientific Community
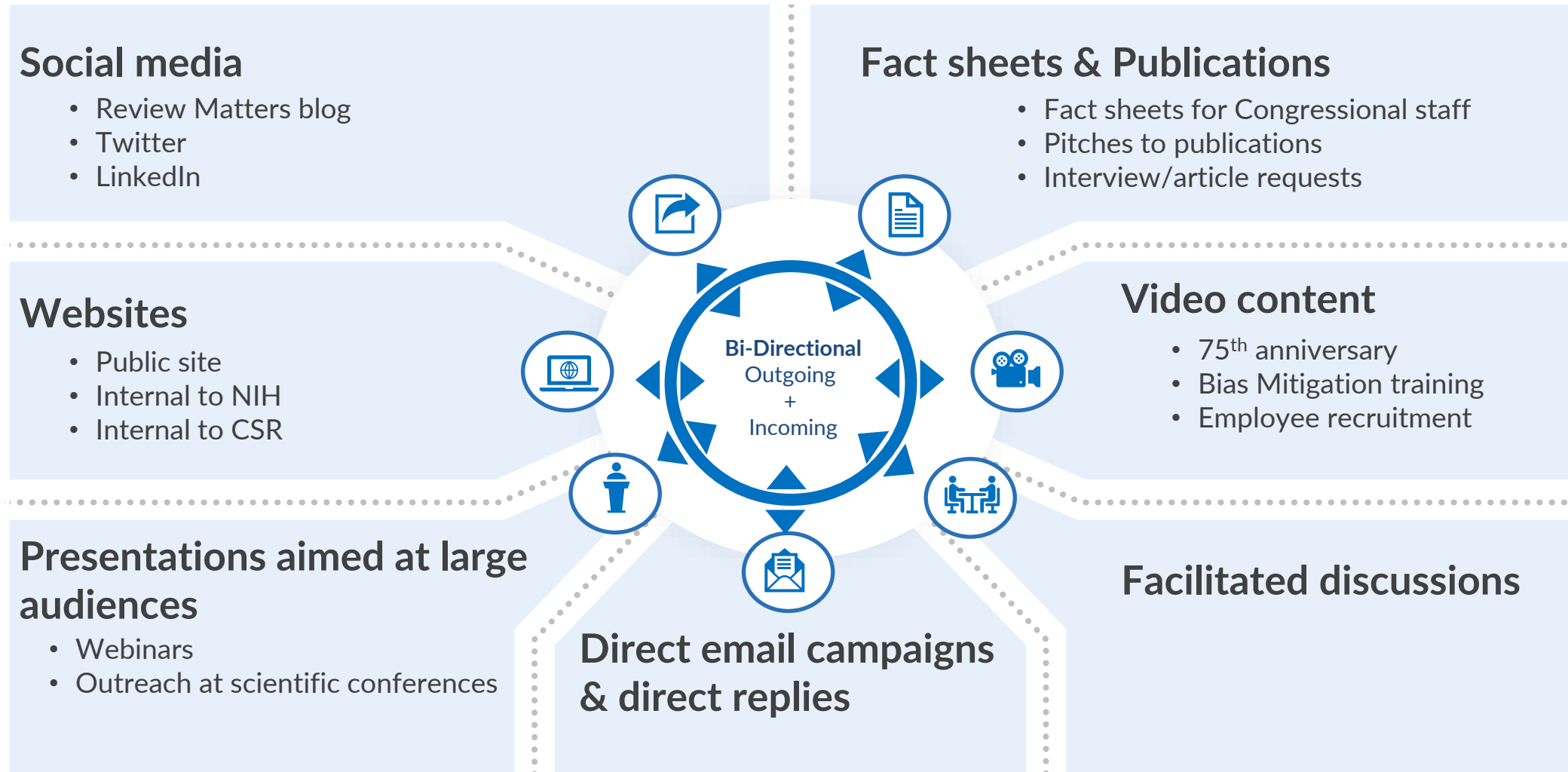- Investigators
- Reviewers
- Sponsored Research Offices

Inside NIH
- Directors of Extramural Research
- Program staff

Inside CSR
- All CSR staff
- Scientific review officers

NIH Center for Scientific Review

Communication Tools for Multiple Audiences

Social media
- Review Matters blog
- Twitter
- LinkedIn

Fact sheets & Publications
- Fact sheets for Congressional staff
- Pitches to publications
- Interview/article requests

Websites
- Public site
- Internal to NIH
- Internal to CSR

Video content
- 75th anniversary
- Bias Mitigation training
- Employee recruitment

Bi-Directional
Outgoing
+
Incoming

Presentations aimed at large audiences
- Webinars
- Outreach at scientific conferences

Direct email campaigns & direct replies

Facilitated discussions

Review Matters

Race & Peer Review

Noni Byrnes
Director

June 12, 2020

The murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis is just one of the latest disgusting exam this country for centuries. While our Black/African-American colleagues have to dea incidents have led the rest of us to…

Should we keep meeting this way?

Bruce Reed
Deputy Director

November 13, 2020

How will study sections meet in the future? NIH peer review depends on robust mee vigorous discussion, identify the applications of highest merit. For the last 75 years, committee meetings were held in-person. Today, in response to the…

Seeking Public Comment on CSR's 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan

Noni Byrnes
Director

February 14, 2022

I am pleased to announce that CSR's draft strategic plan is now open for public comm as our roadmap as CSR advances its mission of seeing that NIH grant applications re scientific reviews—free from inappropriate influences—so NIH can…

Reach?

- Race & Peer Review – 9,249 pageviews

- Should we keep meeting this way? – 6,132 pageviews

- Comment on the Strategic Plan – 5,266 pageviews

Unique pageviews as of 3/9/22

Input via Blog Comments

Wairimu Magua says: June 18, 2020 at 3:09 pm

There is substantial scientific evidence showing that implicit bias influences evaluative processes. Thank you so much for this excellent and much-needed initiative.

M. Andrea Azcarate-Peril says: June 18, 2020 at 1:28 pm

I wish NIH would also commit to the effort of increasing the representation of all minorities. Not only African-Americans. From my point of view, Latino/as are systematically discriminated based on the last name only.

CSR Admin says: June 18, 2020 at 2:08 pm

We are working on increasing the representation of all minorities under-represented in the biomedical sciences and that includes Hispanics. NOT-OD-20-031 (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-20-031.html) describes in detail how the NIH defines minority groups and where our efforts are focused.

Sampath Parthasarathy says: June 17, 2020 at 8:38 pm

More than racial bias, the enemies to a good peer review systems are reviewers themselves. Often reviewers meet in a bar or cafe and predetermine which applicants they should support and which they should oppose. I have seen it again and again. Conflict of interest is a sham. Reviewers may not have direct conflict with an applicant but they let their good or bad bias against an applicant come through.
1. Internet assisted reviews should be encouraged,
2. Only the assigned reviewers should vote. Often, redundant votes greatly influence the outcome.
3. Backdoor communicators should be severely punished. I have personally seen a reviewer running to the restroom to call an investigator about the fate of an application.
4. Scores are manipulated whether one likes it or not.
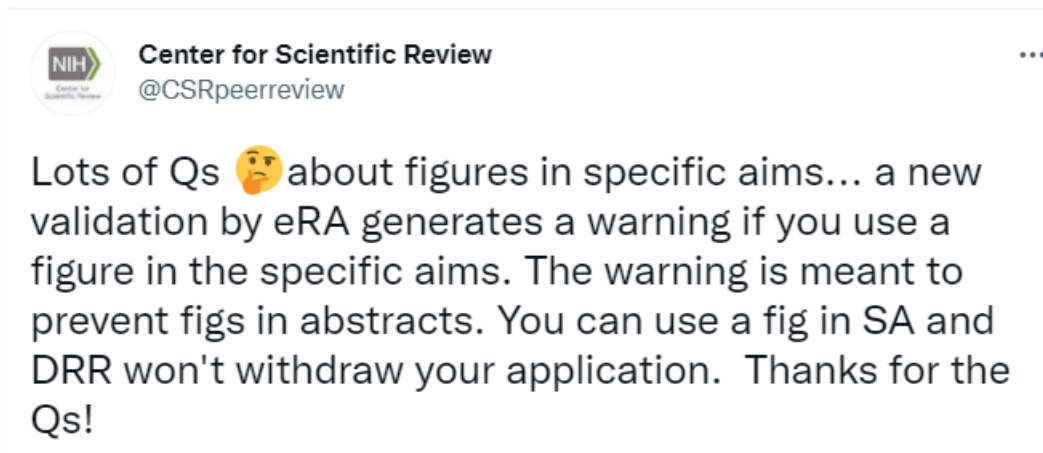
CSR Admin says: June 18, 2020 at 2:27 pm

We encourage anyone with information about breaches in review integrity to contact the CSR Review Integrity Officer (CSRRIO@mail.nih.gov), your SRO, or the NIH Review Policy Officer (reviewpolicyofficer@mail.nih.gov). CSR and the Office of Extramural Research follow up in each case. It's of the utmost importance to us to address these breaches. Inappropriate influences are counter to our mission of identifying the highest impact science.

Who are we reaching?

- >100K people subscribed – does not translate into pageviews – room for improvement.
- Are we reaching a different subset than through Twitter?
- Analytics are needed to better target communication.

How can we use Twitter?

Sharing information

Center for Scientific Review
@CSRpeerreview

Lots of Qs 🤔 about figures in specific aims… a new validation by eRA generates a warning if you use a figure in the specific aims. The warning is meant to prevent figs in abstracts. You can use a fig in SA and DRR won't withdraw your application. Thanks for the Qs!

Center for Scientific Review @CSRpeerreview · Oct 13, 2020
Check out our New Chair Orientation. You might not be preparing to chair a study section meeting, but it will give you some insight as to how meetings are run: public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/M…

Orientation for New Study Section Chairs – 2020

CSR provided orientation and guidance
to incoming study section chairs. While the material is geared towards chairs, others in the community might find it useful in better understanding the review process and how meetings are conducted.

Improving processes through stakeholder input

Naoto T Ueno, MD, PhD ✔ @teamoncology · Mar 2
I am participating in the @NIH **study section** for two days. I love this Zoom review process b/c I do not have to travel & you can hear clearly what the reviewers say. The only problem is that there is no break, and you get tired to be on Zoom for close to 14-16 hrs every 4 M.

Instilling Trust Through Action

Ian Quigley @allmeasures · 9h
This note from the NIH has really resonated with biomedical twitter - I think it's because institution-level apologies and attempts to repair trust are so rare, people are thirsty for it. Good job!

> **Center for Scientific Review** @CSRpeerreview · Jun 23
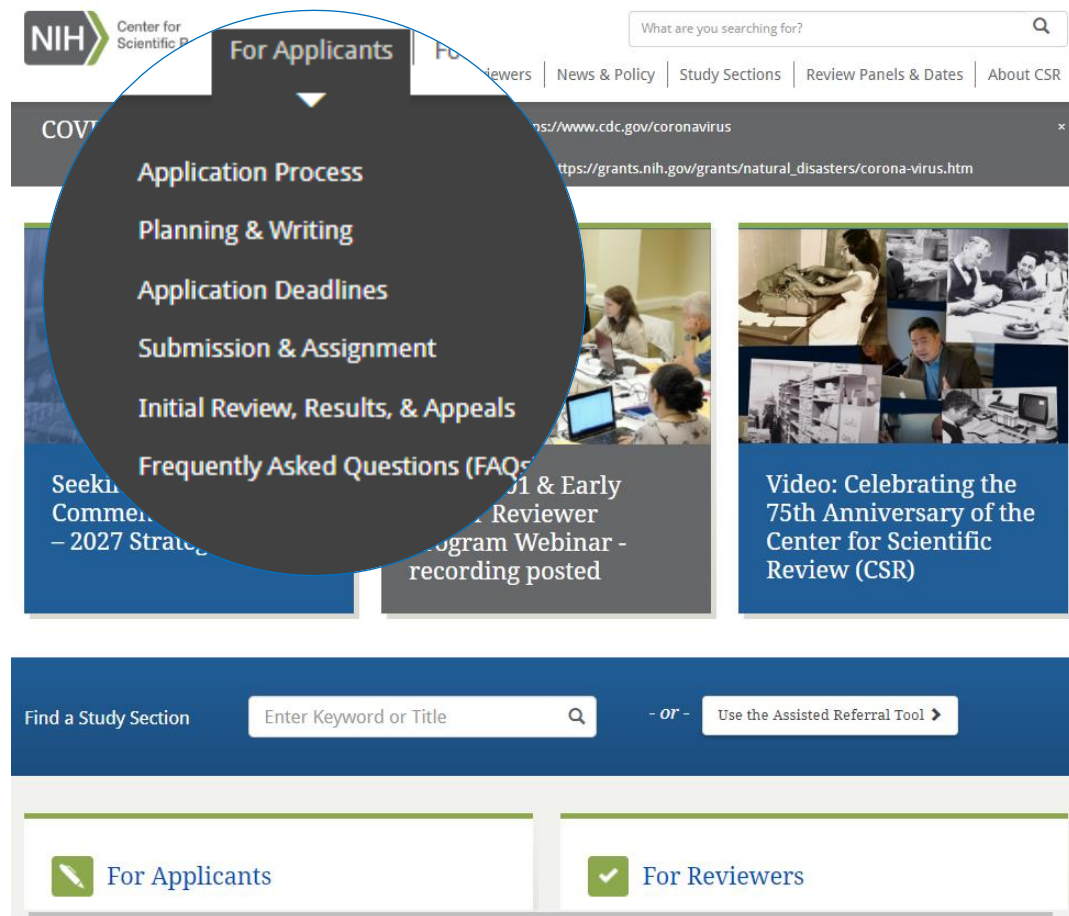> Replying to @kristen_naegle and @NIH
>
> We made an error. We apologize & have reinstated it. If you or others encounter problems related to late apps, appeal 1st to Receipt & Referral (csrdrr@mail.nih.gov), then to the Director of R&R (cooperc@csr.nih.gov). Still not resolved? You're welcome to contact the CSR Director

Duane Watson @duane_g_watson
I was surprised at how receptive the CSR was to what I had to say. Moral of the story: reach out to the SRO if you get biased, racist, or sexist summary statements, even if you're not asking for a re-review. We can't fix the system if we don't speak out.

Websites

Website reach?

	Users	Pageviews	Avg. Session Duration	Pages / Session
All of CSR	46,511	209,496	00:02:59	2.72
For Applicants	5,029	8,498	00:03:07	1.98
For Reviewers	3,434	6,275	00:02:01	1.85
News & Policy	503	816	00:01:35	2.23
Study Sections	26,990	126,967	00:03:38	3.17
Review Panels & Dates	1,360	3,378	00:02:31	6.48
About CSR	8,966	20,500	00:01:58	2.51
Review Matters	4,581	5,853	00:00:46	1.17

Data for Feb 1-28, 2022

Study section pages should be thoughtfully used.

Emerging Imaging Technologies in Neuroscience –
EITN

Reporting Avenues for Concerns Related to Integrity or Fairness

Proposals reviewed in EITN cover a range of imaging technologies at different levels of development. The unifying feature of EITN is that an understanding of the nervous system is important for evaluating the science proposed; that is, applications address problems specific to the nervous system, or that are strongly shaped by the structural, biological, and functional characteristics of the nervous system. Discovery science as well as hypothesis-driven applications are reviewed.

Review Dates
> List of Reviewers on 02/24/2022
> List of Reviewers on 10/21/2021
> List of Reviewers on 06/17/2021

Dr. Sharon Low
Scientific Review Officer

✉ lowss@mail.nih.gov

☐ 301-237-1487

Membership Panel

The membership panel is a list of chartered members only.

> View Membership Panel

How to report a breach of integrity

Please contact your Scientific Review Officer, or the CSR Review Integrity Officer at csrrio@mail.nih.gov, or the NIH Review Policy Officer at reviewpolicyofficer@mail.nih.gov.

How to report concerns about fairness

For issues related to respectful interactions, bias or anything else that could affect the fairness of the review process, contact your SRO or the CSR Associate Director of Diversity & Workforce Development, Dr. Gabriel Fosu, at G.Fosu_AssocDir@csr.nih.gov.

Use of analytics for evaluation and strategy

Openings for Scientific Review Officers (SROs)

APPLY NOW

The announcement will be open 3/14 to 3/18 **or until 250 applications have been received.**

- **Delegated Examining** (Open to the Public): GS-12/13/14 Health Scientist Administrator (Program Officer/Scientist Review Officer)
- **Merit Promotion** (Open to Status Candidates): GS-12/13/14 Health Scientist Administrator (Program Officer/Scientific Review Officer)

What does a career as an SRO offer?

You can have a **tremendous, positive impact on the scientific community.** Peer review is the foundation for NIH funding, and the system depends on highly skilled, expert SROs to identify appropriate expertise and ensure that the review is unbiased and based on the established review criteria.

- **There is a good work-life balance.** The work can be done in 40 hours a week. You can make an impact *and* have time for your family and personal pursuits.
- **CSR has excellent benefits** in terms of retirement, health insurance, and leave. SROs enter as a GS-13 or GS-14 (2021 pay table).
- The Center is a **collegial place to work** and offers **many opportunities for career development and advancement** within the Center and the greater NIH.
- This position is eligible for remote work. Relocation to the Washington, DC area is **not** required. There are other flexibilities for those who choose to work on-site, such as the ability to telework up to 8 days per pay period.
- CSR's specialization in review and the Center's large, diverse workforce provide a rewarding work environment — the breadth of science covered at CSR spans all of NIH.

Recommendations for Applying to an SRO Position at CSR

2775 pageviews

Study sections referred 1289

Small Business: Innovative Immunology Research – AIDC (10)

We're hiring SROs!

CSR is a great place to work - interesting, collegial, and being an SRO is a great way to contribute broadly to science. Learn More

Reporting Avenues for Concerns Related to Integrity or Fairness

The Innovative Immunology (AIDC (10)) study section reviews small business (SBIR/STTR) applications that address basic and applied immunology, immunologic therapies, and diseases of immunologic origin.
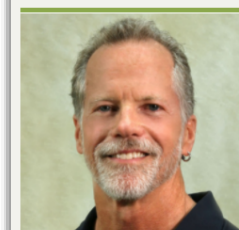
Review Dates
- List of Reviewers on 03/09/2022
- List of Reviewers on 11/15/2021
- List of Reviewers on 06/29/2021

Bioengineering of Neuroscience, Vision Technologies Study Section – BNVT

We're hiring SROs!

CSR is a great place to work - interesting, collegial, and being an SRO is a great way to contribute broadly to science. Learn More

Reporting Avenues for Concerns Related to Integrity or Fairness

The Bioengineering of Neuroscience and Vision Technologies (BNVT) study section reviews applications to develop and utilize bioengineering, materials engineering, and computational approaches for studying the development, structure, function, or pathology of the nervous system. BNVT covers a wide range of technologies as applied to neural systems and to all tissues of the eye. Proposals need not be hypothesis driven if the emphasis is on technique development.

Review Dates
- List of Reviewers on 02/17/2022
- List of Reviewers on 10/14/2021
- List of Reviewers on 06/16/2021

Dr. Robert Elliott
Scientific Review Officer

Data for 2/1-2/28/22

Impact of Outreach
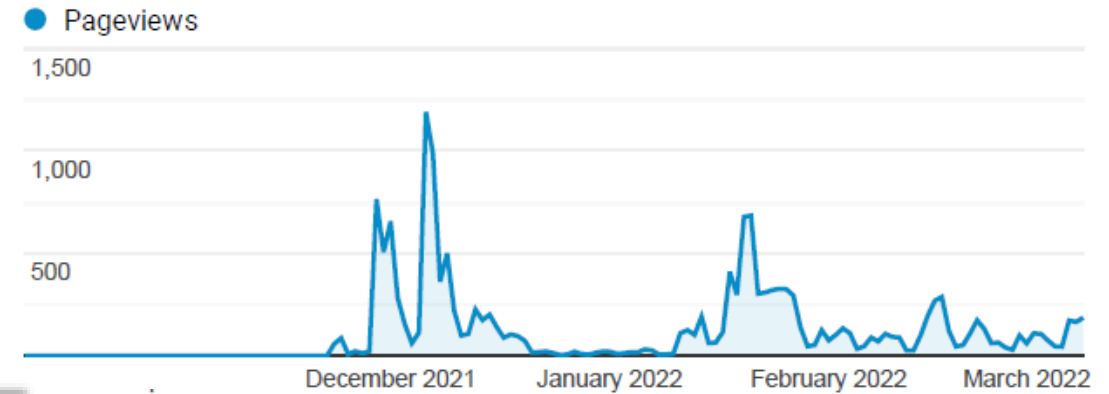
Pageviews of the SRO advertisement

Webinars and Panel Discussions

Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Program Webinar

Monday - May 24, 2021 at 12:00 PM EST

Join our Q & A panel on Monday May 24 from 12-12:45 Eastern with 3 scientists who recently served as ECRs and with two scientific review officers (SRO).
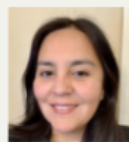
View the Recording
Slides
Questions Submitted & Answers

ECR Panelists

Dr. Christopher Allen
Department of Psychological Science
Kennesaw State University

Dr. Karina Alviña
Department of Neuroscience
University of Florida

Dr. Sharon Ross
Department of Health and Human Development
University of Pittsburgh

Scientific Review Officers (SRO)

Dr. Vanessa Boyce
SRO for the

Dr. Raul Rojas
SRO for Pathophysiology of Obesity and Metabolic

Publicized through:

- Direct email to 1060 ESI under-represented minorities – with photos of panelists
- Dr. Gabriel Fosu sent through diversity networks.
- Sent to Offices of Sponsored Research & Dept. Chairs at minority-serving institutions
- Twitter

NIH Center for Scientific Review

ECR Webinar Results

- >700 attendees, >150 questions

- Increase in registration in the ECR program, often without webinar registration.

- Increase in ECRs who are from groups underrepresented in biomedical research.

Duration	05/07/2020 - 05/27/2020	05/07/2021 - 05/27/2021
Total Registered	49	341
Total Submitted	45	317
Total Accepted	43	281
Total URM	1	68
URM Percentage	2.33%	24.20%

Inside NIH

- Objectives
  - Better understanding of peer review
  - Accurate information provided to investigators
  - Collaborate on outreach efforts
  - Increasing diversity of review panels

- What have we done?
  - Review Liaisons
  - Newsletter for program staff
  - Webpage to explain ENQUIRE process and outcomes
  - IC Reviewer Recommendation tool

Needs more work!

From: Kramer, Kristin (NIH/CSR) [E] <kramerkm@csr.nih.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, January 18, 2022 5:31 PM
To: List PROGRAMOFFICIALS <PROGRAMOFFICIALS@LIST.NIH.GOV>
Subject: Quarterly CSR Update for Program Staff

Quarterly CSR Update for Program Staff

From the NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR)
https://public.csr.nih.gov (Public site)
https://shared.csr.nih.gov/SitePages/Home.aspx (Extranet site; VPN required)
January 18, 2022

In This Issue:
- Seeking Input on the NRSA Fellowship Review Process
- Launch of Bias Mitigation Training Module for CSR Peer Reviewers
- Establishment of Reporting Mechanism for Bias in Peer Review

NIH Center for Scientific Review

Inside CSR

- Build communication skills of our workforce – we really have 250 communication specialists

- Connect all staff to CSR's mission

- Engagement and stakeholder input related to policy and practice

- Improve workplace culture
  - Diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility efforts
  - Hiring transparency
  - Career development
  - Recognition

NIH Center for Scientific Review

Inside CSR

- Guidance for communication with reviewers, in light of the stressors of the pandemic.

17 Dec 2020

Communications & Flexibilities – How does the pandemic change things?

Most of us are usually careful and empathetic in our interactions with reviewers and applicants. Recently, we heard from members of the extramural community who urged us to be extra mindful of the stresses that so many are experiencing during this time, and to reiterate the need for even more empathy and care in our communications. Many of us are also experiencing stress and difficulty in our own lives. The stress we're all under and the demands we're managing can make communication harder. We hope these tips are helpful to you and can serve as a quick reference, especially during busy times.

1. Invite your reviewers to let you know if they need reasonable accommodations. We know from conversations with reviewers that those that most need accommodations are the least likely to make the request. While we don't want you to offer specifics such as lighter review loads up front to the entire panel, you should plan how to engage with reviewers to find out if they need accommodations. One way to start this conversation might be "If you are in a tight spot, let me know...". Or, if you pick up on something in emails with individual reviewers (e.g. that they are struggling to manage caring for family or online school), take a minute to follow that thread.

2. Explain your thinking. You can encourage communication and let reviewers know they're being heard by referencing their concerns and explaining the rationale behind your decisions. For example, "we're starting at 8:30 this time because the reviewers who are out West tell me that they're super-early risers and would prefer to get started" or "I heard from several of you that having a long first day is hard on Zoom, so this time we'll try two days about equal in length..."

3. Review the email communications you recycle each round for tone (e.g. welcome wagon letter, deadlines are coming letter). Your emails are polite and professional, but are they empathetic? In these times, some adjustments to tone are needed. Consider whether an opening such as "I know you might be bearing a heavy

Plans for the Future
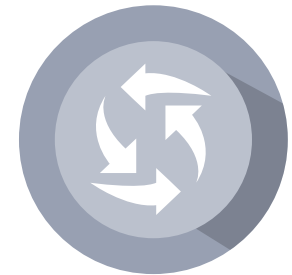
More! And more thoughtful, driven by data

- Broader use of all our platforms
- Assessment for improvement
- Better targeting of outreach

Transparent, data-driven decision-making

Involvement/engagement of stakeholders

Open, multi-directional, respectful communication

Who carries out all this work?

Office of Communications & Outreach

Chuck Dunn
Associate Director

Lamont Williams
Associate Director

Ann Graham-Hamlin
Management Analyst

Lindy-ann Thai
Program Specialist

Division of Planning, Analysis, and Information Management –Tim Flynn, Maya Jones, Shari Myles, Rashid Shah, Ashleigh Sullivan, Khalid Ullah, Harish Vajja, Leo Wu, Chen Zhang, Peiyuan Zhou

CSR Outreach Committee – Aruna Behera, Chuck Dunn, Lystranne Maynard-Smith, Bidyottam Mittra, Alok Mulky, Krystyna Szymczyk, Laurent Taupenot, Lindy-ann Thai, Lamont Williams

Jessica Smith
SRO & Chair, CSR
Outreach Committee

Dr. Gabriel Fosu
Associate Director for
Diversity & Workforce
Development

How can we improve?

What needs do you see that we are not meeting?

CSR's 75th Anniversary

CSR 75th Anniversary_Tease

This is a 90-second teaser of the 75th Anniversary video

https://vimeo.com/615545284/1aebd62309