Answers for Applicants for NIH Funding:
Top Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)
From the NIH Center for Scientific Review

Q: **How can I find a program officer or scientific review officer to answer questions before submitting my application?**

A: Before you submit your application, program officers (POs) can identify the right type of grant program and/or funding opportunity for you and your research and verify that your idea fits within the mission and priorities of an NIH institute or center. POs also can refer you to appropriate scientific review officers (SROs) or study sections.

To find a PO or an NIH institute or center that might fund your research, go to the Matchmaker tool in NIH's RePORTER database and click on the find-program-officials tab.

If you wish to find a study section (review group) at CSR, you can search for one from CSR's home page: www.public.csr.nih.gov. Use keywords in the "Find a Study Section" search box or use the Assisted Referral Tool. Contact information for the SRO responsible for each study section can be found on the study section description pages. You are welcome to contact SROs to inquire about the fit of your proposal with the study section.

After you submit your application, your assigned PO and SRO will be listed in your Electronic Research Administration (eRA) Commons account.

Q: **I don't like the review group you put my application into. What can I do?**

A: Contact the SRO for the assigned study section soon after the assignment is made. They will be able to discuss the study section assignment to you.

The best time to think about this is *before* submission. When you submit your application, you may include (but are not required to) the Assignment Request Form to suggest up to three study sections. Helpful resources for finding a CSR study section are the "Find a Study Section" search box and the Assisted Referral Tool. You can find both on our home page: https://public.csr.nih.gov. CSR follows published study section guidelines in making assignments however, there is some overlap between study sections. CSR carefully considers the suggestions of investigators.

If you suggest one or more study sections and we can find a good fit among them, we will assign the application there. If our referral professionals judge the fit to be poor, they work to find an appropriate alternative. Our paramount concern is having appropriate expertise on the panel where the application is reviewed. If you don't understand, please ask. In the great majority of cases, investigator concerns about application assignments are resolved through communication.

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You also can use the Assignment Request Form to tell us the types of expertise needed to appropriately review your grant application; do not request specific individuals. In addition, you can use this form to identify individuals who may be in conflict with your application. NIH will evaluate the situation according to our conflict of interest standards (https://grants.nih.gov/grants/policy/coi). Please note that being competitors is not a compelling reason.

Q: **When will I receive word on my application?**

A: Notification that CSR has assigned your application to a scientific review group and institute will appear in your eRA Commons account within 2 weeks of the submission deadline. If this notification does not appear in this time frame, you may contact CSR's Division of Receipt and Referral at CSRDRR@mail.nih.gov or 301-435-0715. Note that the scientific review group shown in eRA Commons is not final until you see the name of the SRO. You may see "placeholder" acronyms until the assignment is complete.

After the review, your scores should appear in your Commons account within 3 business days. In most cases, your summary statement will be released within 30 days. It is important to note that funding decisions are not made until after the relevant institute or center council makes its recommendations. Consideration by the assigned funding institute or center occurs after the summary statement release.

For more information, see the Answers for Applicants page on the CSR website: https://public.csr.nih.gov/FAQs/ApplicantsFAQs.

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