

Answers for Applicants for NIH Funding: About the Center for Scientific Review

The [Center for Scientific Review \(CSR\)](#) is responsible for handling the receipt of all NIH grant, fellowship, and cooperative agreement applications and their assignment to scientific review groups (SRGs) for peer review and to NIH institutes and centers (ICs) for funding consideration. CSR itself conducts the initial scientific peer review of the majority of these grant applications (more than 60,000 per year), covering all science within NIH's scope. CSR regularly evaluates its review groups and processes; data and stakeholder input inform changes to strengthen peer review.

**Did you know?
CSR does not fund research.**

Applications relevant to the NIH mission receive two referral assignments. One assignment is to an IC whose mission encompasses the aims and objectives of the application and therefore may be interested in funding the application. In order to be assigned, the IC must participate in the funding opportunity announcement (FOA) under which the application was submitted. The other assignment is to the scientific review group (SRG; also called a study section or review panel) that will conduct the first level of review, an evaluation of scientific and technical merit. NIH uses published study section guidelines to determine the appropriate SRG to carry out review.

The advisory council/board of the potential awarding IC performs the second level of review. Advisory councils are composed of scientists from the extramural research community and sometimes other public representatives. Program staff provide a grant-funding plan to the advisory council. Council members have access to applications and summary statements pending funding for that IC in that council round. Identifying applications that further specific program priorities is a particularly important function of this second level of peer review. Advisory councils recommend projects for funding but do not make funding decisions.

Final funding decisions are made by the IC director taking into account advice of their advisory council and IC staff.

Learn more at <https://public.csr.nih.gov>.