

Guidance for Scientific Review Officers for working with reviewers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH)

Objective: Increase awareness for scientific review officers (SRO) to create a more inclusive, natural environment during review meetings and to reduce the potential stigma when engaging with reviewers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH)

Considerations for engaging with reviewers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing:

- Use person-first language. When referring to a person with a disability, put the emphasis on the person first (*'reviewers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing'*), not the disability (*'Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing reviewers'*).
- Don't make assumptions about what a reviewer who is D/HH needs. *Ask before* you help—allow independence and treat everyone with respect.
- American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters are there to facilitate the conversation for everyone. They manage the conversational dynamics in both directions and reflect a filtered version of what is said. Allowing space for interpreters to manage communication and for questions by all reviewers is key to accurate understanding.
- Body language/eye contact is important for the reviewer to observe. When on Zoom, ensure cameras are on for all speakers. Face the camera when you speak and look at the person you are speaking with, not their interpreter.
- Speak clearly at a normal pace. Don't raise your voice; this distorts sounds for hearing aids & inhibits lip reading.
- Do not assume the person you are speaking with can read your lips.

Pre-meeting considerations for a FACA review meeting:

- NIH [resources](#) include two main options for accommodating a reviewer who is D/HH: [Scheduling an ASL interpreter or a Communication Access Real-time Translation \(CART\) writer](#) (extramural support staff (ESA) can arrange). Per FACA policy, a reviewer can also bring their own interpreter(s); the ESA will ensure they sign the appropriate forms.
- Meet early on with reviewers/interpreters/CART writers to go over the timing and logistics of the meeting. Include the Chair in your meetings, if appropriate, to reinforce best practices and pacing strategies.
- Ask the ESA to schedule an ASL interpreter for the pre-meeting orientation that the reviewer who is D/HH is attending. Consider describing pacing strategies to your panel members during orientation.
- Consider sending (securely) the list of applications in the order of discussion including assigned reviewer names (except for conflicts) to the reviewer who is D/HH so they can follow along during the meeting more easily.

Considerations during a Zoom review meeting (similar considerations apply to in-person meetings):

- Acknowledge the presence of interpreters during opening remarks. Set the expectation that all reviewers are responsible for a successful meeting regarding communication.
- On Zoom, it may be difficult for reviewers who are D/HH to track who is speaking and whether it's an assigned reviewer or another panel member. Since the reviewer who is D/HH will be 'pinning' the assigned reviewers for each application, SRO/Chair may need to ensure an appropriate pause at the beginning of each application.
- Reviewers who are D/HH may also need accommodations for live tracking of the applications being discussed. The ESA can post the application number being discussed in the chat box.
- Interpreting the discussion between auditory and visual languages creates a normal lag time. The SRO will need to set a different/slower pace to allow for the interpreter to complete the interpretation or for the captions from the CART writer to fully appear. Allow adequate time for reviewers who are D/HH to comment or ask questions. Remind reviewers to raise their hand when speaking so the SRO can pace the discussion.
- Reviewers who are D/HH will be able to communicate with the SRO in real-time using email or the chat function to ensure appropriate pacing, if needed.
- When reviewers who are D/HH are participating, it would be helpful to include the visual clock on Zoom.
- Including regular breaks to offset Zoom fatigue is especially important for reviewers who are D/HH.

Additional resources (internal to CSR; VPN Required):

[ESS Guide for working with reviewers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing \(D/HH\)](https://insider.csr.nih.gov/sites/csr/SitePages/IDEA-Council--Accessibility.aspx)
<https://insider.csr.nih.gov/sites/csr/SitePages/IDEA-Council--Accessibility.aspx>

Footer to be included in reviewer recruitment emails:

Reasonable accommodations, including American Sign language (ASL) interpreting and Communication Access Real-time Transcription (CART) services, are available upon request to participate as a reviewer on this panel.