

2024 CSR Incoming Chair Orientation

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Upcoming changes to peer review across NIH

In effect for Summer 2025 meetings (applications received on/after Jan 25, 2025)

Simplified review framework for most NIH research project grants (RPGs)

- Focuses peer review on scientific/technical merit, mitigates reputational bias, reduces reviewer burden

Changes to fellowship review criteria and application

- Changes to the review criteria - to better focus reviewers on key assessments relevant to training, mitigate reputational bias
- Changes to the application - to align it with the review criteria, clarify instructions, reduce applicant burden

RPG Review: 5 Criteria → 3 Factors

Through Feb/Mar 2025 meetings

Overall Impact Score based on 5 criteria

- Significance - scored 1-9
- Investigator(s) – scored 1-9
- Innovation – scored 1-9
- Approach – scored 1-9
- Environment – scored 1-9

Summer 2025 meetings

Overall Impact Score based on 3 Factors

- **Factor 1: Importance of the Research** (*should it be done?*)
 - Scored 1-9
- **Factor 2: Rigor and Feasibility** (*can it be done?*)
 - Scored 1-9
- **Factor 3: Expertise and Resources** (*are the expertise and resources in place to do it?*)
 - Evaluated as “appropriate” or “additional expertise/resources needed”; if additional needs are identified, comments are required
 - Gaps in expertise and/or resources should affect Overall Impact score

*Applies to most RPGs: R01, R03, R15, R16, R21, R33, R34, R36, R61, RC1, RC2, RC4, RF1, RL1, RL2, U01, U34, U3R, UA5, UC1, UC2, UC4, UF1, UG3, UH2, UH3, UH5, R21/R33, UH2/UH3, UG3/UH3, R61/R33

RPG review changes based on extensive input from scientific community

Jan 2020 – April 2021: Working Groups of CSR Advisory Council

- **Initial input gathering through blog posts** (Open Mike, Review Matters), >400 comments, content analyses
- **Convened two CSR Advisory Council working groups** with overlapping membership to consider non-clinical trials (~90% of NIH applications) and clinical trials RPGs.
- **Legal and regulatory guardrails provided:** *5 review criteria (Significance, Investigators, Innovation, Approach, Environment) are defined by PHS C.F.R. 52.h.8– NIH has discretion about how to interpret or group them, and on all matters of scoring.* Working groups held 11 virtual meetings to develop framework and recommendations
- **Full CSR Advisory Council approval** of working group recommendations, publication of report

July 2021 – Sept 2022: NIH leadership input

- Internal NIH discussions, input/modifications to the framework, **approval by IC and NIH leadership**

Dec 2022 – March 2023: Public Request for Information (RFI)

- Over 800 responses, from individuals, societies. **Majority of respondents were very supportive - not surprising given that these changes were developed with significant, sustained input from the broader extramural scientific community**
- Minority felt that Factor 3 should be scored; smaller minority suggested blinded reviews
- **Most recommended that CSR develop strong training** resources to socialize the change for reviewers, study section chairs, and scientific review officers

Oct 2023: NIH announced the launch of SRF ([NOT-OD-24-010](#)), effective Jan 2025 receipt dates

Fellowship Review: 5 Criteria → 3 Criteria

Achieved through similar process of extensive community input/engagement

Current

Overall Impact Score based on 5 criteria

- Fellowship Candidate
- Sponsors, Collaborators, Consultants
- Research Training Plan
- Training Potential
- Institutional Environment & Commitment to Training

Applications submitted on or after Jan 25, 2025

Overall Impact Score based on 3 criteria

- **Candidate Preparedness and Potential**
 - Wider range of indicators of scientific potential and preparedness
- **Research Training Plan**
- **Commitment to Candidate**
 - Evaluations of the sponsor and environment framed in terms of their contributions to the applicant's scientific training. **Sponsor's extramural funding is not considered by peer reviewers.**

Revised fellowship application

- Aligned with the new criteria for more emphasis on quality of the training plan; **grades not required** or allowed
- Shorter, more structured, targeted, reduces boilerplate

Learn more on NIH's one-stop shop sites for RPGs, Fellowships

Register for public webinars, view recorded webinars, resources, FAQs, and more

Research Project Grants (RPGs)

<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/peer/simplifying-review.htm>

The screenshot shows the NIH Grants & Funding website. The header includes the NIH logo and the text 'GRANTS & FUNDING NIH Central Resource for Grants and Funding Information'. The navigation menu has 'HOME', 'ABOUT GRANTS', 'FUNDING', 'POLICY & COMPLIANCE', and 'NEWS & EVENTS'. The breadcrumb trail is 'Home » Policy & Compliance » Peer Review Policies and Practices » Simplifying Review of Research Project Grant'. The main content area is titled 'Simplifying Review of Research Project Grant Applications' and contains a paragraph of introductory text and a numbered list of three key points: 1. Enabling peer reviewers to better focus on answering the key questions necessary to assess the scientific and technical merit of proposed research projects; 2. Mitigating the effect of reputational bias by refocusing the evaluation of investigator/environment to within the context of the proposed research; 3. Reducing reviewer burden by shifting policy compliance activities to NIH staff. A 'Background' link is visible at the bottom of the content area.

Fellowships

<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/peer/revisions-nih-fellowship-application-review-process.htm>

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CSR training sessions for study section chairs – Spring 2025

Learn more about other CSR initiatives and priorities

NIH Center for Scientific Review

What are you searching for?

For Applicants | For Reviewers | News & Policy | Study Sections | Review Panels & Dates | About CSR

- Learn About the Benefits of CSR's Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Program
- Proposed Changes to NIH Peer Review
- See CSR's Initiatives to Address Bias in Peer Review

Find a Study Section

Enter Keyword or Title

- or - Use the Assisted Referral Tool

For Applicants
Explore resources to assist in the planning, writing, and

For Reviewers
Explore tools and guidance for the successful reviewing,

CSR's Website: <https://public.csr.nih.gov/>

- CSR's 2022-2027 Strategic Plan
 - Data, full reports, analyses, e.g.
 - Upcoming changes in the review of RPGs, fellowships
 - Actions to address bias in peer review
 - Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program
 - In-person versus Zoom meeting evaluation
 - Reviewer demographics
 - CSR Advisory Council, Council working group reports
- And much more.....

Q/A, Discussion, Comments
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