



Center for  
Scientific Review

## Nomination Slates

Principles, practices and processes for appointing CSR  
study section members

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# What Are Slates?

## Annual nominations and supporting documentation for appointments to chartered study sections

- Serve to replenish and refresh SRG panels, keep them scientifically current
- Must meet CSR guidelines and FACA requirements—a complex task of balancing competing demands
- Vetted at multiple levels at CSR; IRG

# Our Goal

**Every one of CSRs 175 chartered study sections has a roster of appointed members who:**

- Have the expertise needed to review the set of applications defined by the study section guidelines
- Are well respected, contributing, influential scientists
- Represent a diversity of views and backgrounds
- Are good reviewers who contribute to the effective functioning of the panel

# Criteria for Evaluating Potential Reviewers

- Expertise
- Stature
- Funding
- Diversity considerations
- Review skills

## Nominees Are Evaluated

- Individually and
- With respect to the roster as a whole

# Criterion 1: Expertise

- **Should match the core scientific topics and methods reviewed by the study section**
- **Must be carefully managed across nomination cycles**

## Indicators of Expertise

- Grants, grant applications
- Papers/talks (topics and journals/conferences)
- Patents
- Professional roles, appointments
- Editorial and review duties

# Vetting of Expertise

## **SRO**

Needs expertise in proportion to the topics and methods of applications reviewed in that study section

## **Chief**

Reviews nominee expertise in relationship to published guidelines

## **Outside Experts**

Asked to certify that the person has appropriate expertise to review for that study section

- Program officers invested in the SRG
- Prominent scientists

## **DD, OD**

Review credentials and fit

# Criterion 2: Stature

**Should be senior or mid-career researchers who are highly regarded in their scientific community**

- Typically a majority are full Professors, and nearly all others Associate Professors
- Assistant professors are occasionally nominated

## Indicators of Stature

- Home university/Institution
- Faculty rank, endowed chairs, etc.
- Editorial positions
- Invited talks, awards
- Publications (rate, journal stature, citation metrics)

# Criterion 3: Funding

**Current research support is a key indicator that the nominee is an active and successful researcher**

- NIH funding preferred
- Other competitive funding can be equally persuasive
  - VA, DoD
  - Foundation, e.g., HHMI

**Not equally applicable to all fields. We always look for indicators of competitive success.**

# Criterion 4: Diversity Considerations

**A diversity of views makes the review process more robust and contributes to better outcomes.**

## Diversity Is Multi-dimensional

- Demographic diversity: Representation of women and minorities is very important
- Regional diversity
- Scientific diversity
  - Methods or stats vs. topical expertise
  - Engineering/discovery vs. applied, clinical translational
  - Basic physiology vs disease expertise
  - Different points of view in controversial areas
  - Expertise in different models
- Career stage

# Criterion 5: Review Skills

- Are fair minded and collegial
- Articulate their views well
- Listen to others, are open to different ideas
- Respect review policy and practice

**Not all great scientists are great reviewers**

# Ethics and Integrity

**We seek to protect both reviewers and the review process from circumstances that would create actual or perceived bias.**

## **Reviewers Are Screened for:**

- A history of ethics lapses or violations of scientific, or review integrity standards.
- Publicly available information, e.g., Google searches, for indications of legal or ethical problems, including sexual harassment.

**Reviewers with integrity concerns are not used in NIH peer review.**

# Other Issues

- Dyads (Excess Influence)
- High Review Service (Excess Influence)
- Prior appointment to the committee (Excess influence)
- Concurrent Committee Service (FACA bar to service at two levels of review)

# Role of NIH Program

- Invited to suggest reviewers
- Asked to comment on nomination slates

**Program suggestions, recommendations, and concerns are always taken seriously**

**Decisions are made by CSR**

# Slate Review Process at CSR

- SRO creates slate
- IRG chief reviews (**must approve**)
- Divisional Management Analyst (analysis, compliance)
- Division Director reviews (**must approve**)
- Committee Management Office reviews (**must approve**)
- Program reviews (positive or negative comments)
- CMO informs DD of program comments and concerns
- Office of the Director (analysis)
- CSR Director reviews (**must approve**)
- Office of Federal Advisory Committee Policy (analysis, compliance) (**must approve**)
- NIH Office of the Director (Principle Deputy) **Final approval**

**Total time 10-12 months**

# Final Thoughts

- Good slates are the foundation of good study sections
- CSR commits substantial resource to attaining good slates
- Our guidelines and processes reflect CSR's strong commitment to:
  - Expert peer review
  - An open process that incorporates a diversity of opinion
  - A process that is free of inappropriate influence.

**Questions?**