



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?