

Questions from the 14 April 2021 Grants 101 & Early Career Reviewer Program Webinar

Grant submission & Referral (for review) Processes

Q: How does AHRQ grants fit into NIH?

A: The CSR Division of Receipt and Referral receives and processes AHRQ applications, but we refer them on. AHRQ reviews all applications submitted to their Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) and they don't participate in any NIH FOAs.

Q: If applying as an R15 institution, can collaborators be from non-R15 institutions?

A: Yes. See <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/r15.htm>. R15 eligibility requirements apply only to people in the principal investigator role (PI or multi-PI).

Q: If there is an institute that is not included in the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), does that mean there is no option for grant applications for cross-disciplinary applications involving those institutes?

A: The significance of an institute being listed among those participating in an FOA is that only participating institutes will fund applications submitted to that FOA.

Q: What is the difference between eCommons and grants.gov?

A: [Grants.gov](https://grants.gov) is the platform through which all Federal grant proposals are submitted, regardless of agency. So, whether you are submitting a grant to the Department of Defense or to NIH, you'd do so through grants.gov. eRA Commons is the platform that NIH uses to connect with investigators and reviewers.

Q: Could you explain Notice of Special Interests (NOSI) a bit more, and how this actually affects the submission process?

A: A NOSI does not affect the submission process. A NOSI is a way for NIH funding Institutes and Centers to highlight interest in a research area that does *not* have set aside funds or special review criteria or review considerations. NOSIs usually direct applicants to Parent Announcements (PA) with standard NIH submission dates.

Q: Would you kindly describe the difference between multi-PI R01 and subcontract on R01? Are they equivalent?

A: No, they are not equivalent. Principal investigators all have a leadership role in the proposed work, in entirety. If a portion of work is subcontracted out, the person doing that work is only leading that piece. You can read more about that multi-PI applications here: https://grants.nih.gov/grants/multi_pi/.

Q: Are non-US researchers who are collaborating with US-based mentors to conduct research at a US site eligible to apply for NIH grants?

A: It is dependent upon the institution. Although people often speak of the investigators as the "applicants", it is actually the research institution that is the "applicant". Whether a non-US researcher may submit an application to the NIH for research done at a US site, is dependent upon whether the

institution will allow that investigator to serve as a principal investigator or as key personnel on a grant application.

Q: Grant applications are due at 5 pm on the grant deadline date - is that 5 pm local time or 5 pm for NIH?

A: Applications are due at 5 pm time, local time of the applicant.

Q: How many times of resubmission will be allowed for a proposal?

A: One resubmission is allowed. See: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm#esi>

Q: I will be serving as an Early Career Reviewer (ECR) in June. In June, I am also submitting my R01 application. Is late (or extended) submission allowed who serves as a reviewer?

A: Yes. Please see [NOT-OD-15-039](#) for details. You can also contact your scientific review officer (SRO) if you have questions about how to proceed.

Q: Do the general timelines presented for the reviewing and funding process apply to SBIR (small business grants) program?

A: The timelines are similar. You can find specifics for SBIR at: <https://sbir.nih.gov/apply/submission-dates>

Q: Do we have a choice about the review group? I thought it was assigned and we could not request.

A: You may use the [Assignment Request Form](#) to request a study section assignment (and also - to request a funding institute assignment, to list specific expertise needed, and to list people with whom you have a conflict of interest). CSR considers the requests made but will make the assignment based on published study section guidelines. By design, there is often overlap in scope of study sections, allowing some flexibility in assignment.

Q: Does the request form [[Assignment Request Form](#)] have to be sent in before/at the same time as the grant submission, or can this be submitted later? And if it can be submitted later, how much later can this request be submitted?

A: It has to be submitted with the grant application.

Q: Regarding the [Assignment Request Form](#), is it quite possible that the CSR will assign a proposal to a study section that differs from what the PI requested on the form? Second, if a PI learns in eRA Commons that the study section assignment is not their chosen assignment, are there channels to request reassignment to a different study section?

A: CSR will consider requests made using the Assignment Request Form but the locus of review is based on published study section guidelines. To request a change in study section, contact the scientific review officer (SRO) of the study section to which it was assigned.

Q: Is there a process to request that the study section that your grant was assigned to be changed?

A: Contact the scientific review officer (SRO) of the study section to which it was assigned.

Q: What defines if a proposal will be sent to a special emphasis section?

A: Some grant mechanisms, such as fellowship applications (F30, F31, F32) or small business (R41, R42, R43, R44) applications, are always reviewed in special emphasis panels (SEP). In these cases, the SEPs are recurring, meaning that they take place every review cycle and, even though they do not have standing members, often reviewers return to the panel with regularity. Research grants are typically reviewed in standing study sections. The most common situation for review of research grants in a SEP is when someone among the key personnel is a member of the most appropriate standing study section. In that case, the application is reviewed in a SEP because the application cannot be reviewed by the standing panel due to a conflict of interest created by having a member as key personnel.

Q: Follow-up question regarding CSR study section assignment....what components of the proposal does the CSR consider when making an assignment? i.e. is it primarily the Project Summary?

A: Typically, the sections CSR focuses on in making an assignment are the Specific Aims and the Research Strategy. The Project Summary is just that – a summary – and we prefer more detail to make assignments.

Q: How to find SRO information for career development award with special study sections?

A: In the funding opportunity announcement (FOA), there is a section that lists a review contact; start there. Fellowship applications (F30, F31, F32) are primarily reviewed at CSR in recurring special emphasis panels. You can find a list of these here: <https://public.csr.nih.gov/StudySections/Fellowship>. Many funding institutes review K awards. Some K applications are reviewed at CSR, usually within standing study sections based on scientific fit.

Q: Many study sections seem to not review R15. Is there any additional advice for identifying appropriate study sections for R15?

A: R15 are typically assigned to a study section based on scientific fit. Use CSR's [Assisted Referral Tool](#) to identify potential study sections.

Q: Are study sections tied to specific NIH Institutes? Or, does a study section review applications for more than one institute?

A: Study sections run by the Center for Scientific Review typically have applications that are assigned to more than one funding institute. Applications are assigned to study section based on scientific scope covered by that study section and usually that crosses boundaries of institutes. About 24% of NIH grant applications are reviewed by review branches at NIH funding Institutes and Centers. In that case, all applications reviewed are assigned to that same institute for potential funding.

[Early Stage Investigator Status](#)

Q: What does “early stage investigator status” mean and what are the implications for grants and review?

A: Early Stage Investigators (ESI) are investigators who are within 10 years of their terminal research degree or post-graduate clinical training (whichever date is later) and who has not competed successfully as a program director (PD) or principal investigator (PI) for a substantial independent research award. ESI status applies to R01 applications in review. ESI R01s are reviewed in a cluster – in other words, all ESI applications are discussed in a cluster instead of switching back and forth in the order of discussion between R01s from established investigators and ESI R01s. The advantage of ESI

status is primarily in terms of pay lines. Funding institutes prioritize ESI funding. You can find more details, including what grants are considered “substantial independent research awards” and how to request an extension of ESI status at: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm#esi>

Q: When does the early stage investigator terminal degree time start for MD and MD/PhD applicants? Is it after completion of residency?

A: It starts after completion of residency.

Q: Am I eligible for New Investigator status with R00 grant?

A: Yes and you are eligible for Early Stage Investigator (ESI) status.

Q: Does New Investigator and Early Stage Investigator (ESI) status apply only to R01?

A: It applies to R01 and to [R01-equivalent grants](#). R01-equivalent grants are defined as activity codes DP1, DP2, DP5, R01, R23, R29, R37, R56, RF1, RL1, U01 and R35 from select NIGMS and NHGRI program announcements (PAs). Not all of these activities may be in use by NIH every year.

Q: If I have R21, will I be considered as New investigator for an R01 submission?

A: Yes. R21s are not considered equivalent to an R01.

Q: Would you still have Early Stage Investigator (ESI) status if you receive a MIRA? Will you have ESI status if you serve as co-PI or co-I on a grant with another PI?

A: MIRA awards are considered R01-equivalent and so if you receive a MIRA, you lose ESI status. If you are an MPI (multiple principle investigator) on a funded R01 or equivalent, you would lose your ESI status. If you are a co-investigator (this is different from being “principal” investigator) on a funded R01, you would not lose your ESI status.

Q: Would you lose the New/Early Stage Investigator (ESI) status if your Co-PI has previously received an NIH grant?

A: ESI status on an R01 submission is determined by the ESI status of the principal investigator.

Q: If I submitted my first R01 application within the 10 years of the graduation and was eligible for the Early Stage Investigator (ESI) status, but lose that status before submitting the resubmission, is the resubmission still flagged as an ESI application?

A: ESI status is determined at the time the application is submitted. It seems the resubmission would not be flagged as an ESI application if your status changed before submission but you can get a definitive answer from the Office of Extramural Research, which sets review policy. Contact them at NIHTrain@mail.nih.gov.

Q: Are applications from "new investigators" and "early career investigators" reviewed and judged at the same way?

A: New Investigators (NI) are investigators who have not competed successfully in the program director (PD) or principal investigator (PI) role for a substantial independent research award. Early stage investigators (ESI) are NI who are also within 10 years of their terminal research degree or post-graduate clinical training (whichever date is later). NI and ESI are clustered together in review. R01 or equivalent

applications from ESI with meritorious scores are prioritized for funding. NI are funded based on the funding institute's programmatic priorities.

Q: Will there be any Early Stage Investigator (ESI) adjustments for COVID?

A: Early Stage Investigator status can be extended to account for interruptions resulting from COVID-19.

See: <https://nexus.od.nih.gov/all/2020/04/09/can-esi-status-be-extended-due-to-disruptions-from-covid-19/> for more information.

Q: How do you request extra Early Stage Investigator (ESI) eligibility due to motherhood?

A: You can find information on how to request an extension here: <https://grants.nih.gov/policy/early-investigators/index.htm#esi>

Q: Do I qualify for an early investigator extension if I have had children but I am a man?

A: Anyone with family care responsibilities may request an [extension](#) of [early investigator status](#).

Q: I received my MD in 2000 but have only recently returned to academics. Am I excluded from an "early career" status?

A: In terms of grant submission and funding, you would not qualify as an [Early Stage Investigator](#). If you have not competed successfully in the role as program director (PD) or principal investigator (PI) for an [R01 or equivalent](#), you would be considered a New Investigator. You might be eligible to participate in the [CSR Early Career Reviewer](#) program if you are not an associate professor or higher rank.

Q: I have been checking the status of my R01 application. In the status information, it still shows that I am not eligible for Early Stage Investigator Status despite updating my profile and fulfilling the criteria to be considered for an Early Stage Investigator. How shall I address this?

A: If you believe the status is incorrect, contact the [NIH eRA Help Desk](#).

The CSR Early Career Reviewer Program

Q: Can New Investigators that are not Early Stage Investigators (ESI) take part in the [CSR Early Career Reviewer program](#)? I recently moved to US, so I'm a new investigator but not ESI.

A: Please see: <https://public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/BecomeAREviewer/ECR> for eligibility criteria. New Investigators who are not yet associate professors may be eligible.

Q: Can Instructors apply to the [Early Career Reviewer](#) (ECR) program?

A: Eligibility requires being in an independent position for at least 1 year; it does not necessarily require a title of "assistant professor". See <https://public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/BecomeAREviewer/ECR> for details.

Q: If you are a young faculty member with a MPI (multiple principal investigators) status but are NOT the contact PI (principal investigator) can you apply to the Early Career Reviewer program?

A: MPI, whether or not the contact PI, on a funded R01 or equivalent are not eligible to participate in the Early Career Reviewer program.

Q: Does a summary statement from a K grant qualify you for the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program?

A: Yes

Q: With respect to grant history for the CSR Early Career Reviewer program, do you have to have been the submitting PI or do other designations qualify?

A: One criterion for the Early Career Reviewer program is that one must have submitted an NIH grant application and received the summary statement. To meet that requirement, you have to have been in the principal investigator (PI) role.

Q: Do dissertation grants, e.g., R36, count towards the requirement of having received a summary statement for the Early Career Reviewer program?

A: If you were in the principal investigator (PI) role and you received a summary statement, it satisfies that requirement.

Q: For the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) eligibility requirement of having submitted an NIH grant as a principal investigator (PI) and received summary statements--I assume that's generally a K. Would a VA Career Development Award count for that requirement as well?

A: Any NIH grant that results in a summary statement fulfills this requirement. A grant application to a VA program does not.

Q: Do I qualify as a ECR (Early Career Reviewer) if I was awarded a K99/R00?

A: Likely. Having a K99/R00 is not a disqualifier. Please see <https://public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/BecomeAReviewer/ECR> for all criteria.

Q: I have been denied in being an early career reviewer with the reason "assistant professor" when I applied. What does that mean?

A: It means we might have made a mistake! Please reapply at: <https://public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/BecomeAReviewer/ECR> and if you receive that denial message, contact us at CSRearlycareerreviewer@mail.nih.gov.

Q: Are you eligible for the Early Career Reviewer program if you have submitted a fellowship application? Or must your reviewed grant be as a faculty member (such as an R21 I guess).

A: One of the criteria to participate in the CSR Early Career Reviewer program is to have submitted an NIH grant application and received the summary statement. A fellowship application and summary statement fulfills that criterion.

Q: For the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) criterion on authorship, how is senior authorship determined (first or last on the author line)?

A: We consider senior author to be first, last, or corresponding author.

Q: Can I qualify for the CSR Early Career Reviewer program if I was a research scientist for a year and only have been an assistant professor for 6 months?

A: One criterion for participation is having been in an independent position for at least a year. Whether you qualify depends on whether you were independent in your position as a research scientist.

Q: For the CSR Early Career Reviewer program, could you please provide us with example of experience equivalent to 1 year of experience as fulltime assistant professor? In industry or as a research assistant professor or any?

A: The key is that the 1 year must be an *independent* position. If you were formally mentored during that time, it does not meet that eligibility requirement. There is some variability in what qualifies; this is why we ask applicants to the Early Career Review program to submit their CV.

Q: Is a postdoc eligible for the CSR Early Career Reviewer program?

A: No. You must have held an independent position for at least one year to be eligible.

Q: For being a reviewer in the Early Career Reviewer program, does one have to be tenure track or may non-tenure track people also apply?

A: The requirement related to employment for the Early Career Reviewer program is that one must have held an independent position for at least 1 year.

Q: If I have served on a one-time NIH special emphasis panel (SEP), would that disqualify me from the CSR Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program?

A: Yes. The program is limited to those who have not had review experience at the NIH (aside from as a non-interactive mail reviewer).

Q: Does senior authorship of book chapters count towards qualifications for the Early Career Reviewer program?

A: No, the publication requirement refers to peer-reviewed research articles.

Q: I previously applied to the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program, and based upon the website I am eligible, but I received an email that I was not eligible and when I tried to follow-up, I never received a response. Should I/Could I apply again?

A: Yes, please! We apologize for not responding to your email. If you write to CSRearlycareerreviewer@mail.nih.gov and do not receive a reply in a timely fashion, please email Kristin Kramer at kramerkm@csr.nih.gov.

Q: What % of people who apply for the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program get selected to serve?

A: It is field dependent as we do not have an equal number of ECRs in the program in each field. That said, we have a database of accepted ECRs from which scientific review officers (SRO) recruit. The database hovers at ~ 1000 people and we recruit ~900 ECRs per year. One's odds are pretty good but ECRs are always welcome to contact SROs running panels in their area and express interest in serving. We say that just because SROs are really busy and so it's helpful to call attention to yourself.

Q: What is the time commitment to participate in the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program?

A: ECRs are assigned two applications to review as the tertiary reviewer and are expected to write a full critique for each assignment. ECRs must attend pre-meeting training provided by the scientific review

officer (SRO), complete the written reviews, and attend the entire review meeting (usually 1-2 days). As to how much time it takes to review each application, that varies depending on the reviewer.

Q: If one is chosen as an Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Reviewer for a study section, are they generally the 3rd reviewer - or is it more common they would not be directly assigned a proposal but rather have voting privileges at study section?

A: ECRs are always assigned to review 2 applications as Reviewer 3. They also enter a final score for all discussed applications, except any with which they are in conflict.

Q: Can an Early Career Reviewer (ECR) attend review section when s/he applies for a grant at the same time?

A: No one may serve on a review panel that is reviewing their own application. An ECR may serve as a reviewer on one panel while their own application is being reviewed in a different panel.

Q: If you participate in the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program will you be then added to a study section review group after your service is over?

A: No. Service as an ECR is not an automatic path to nomination to serve as a standing study section member.

Q: I have been registered for the ECR program since 2017. Other than updating my profile periodically, is there anything else I can do to increase my potential to be selected for the program?

A: Yes. Please send an email to scientific review officers (SRO) running panels in your area of expertise and express interest in serving. SROs are busy and an email contact just helps put you on their radar.

Q: Will all individuals accepted into the Early Career Reviewer (ECR) program be recruited to serve as a reviewer? And if not, what/how the decision/choice made?

A: No. For most panels, scientific review officers (SRO) are required to recruit two ECRs. All people accepted into the ECR program are added to a database from which SROs recruit ECRs to serve as reviewers. SROs recruit based on the expertise needed. One's odds of being recruited depend on the expertise needed and how many other ECRs in the database have similar expertise.

Q: The Early Career Reviewer (ECR) application requires a CV upload, other than what you noted (i.e., two senior-authored papers, early/new investigator status, etc.), what else are you specifically looking for within the CV?

A: If the ECR applicant has a title other than "assistant professor", we might look for evidence in the CV that the position is an independent position. If accepted into the program, scientific review officers have access to the CV and they might look at it in more detail to learn more about your expertise and to decide if you are a good scientific fit for their study section.

Other Review Experience

Q: As postdoc fellows are not able to serve as Early Career Reviewers (ECR), is there another avenue for participation and training before becoming established as a funded investigator?

A: Not for active participation as a reviewer. You can find more information on the review process on our [website](#). On occasion CSR participates in mock study sections at annual meetings of scientific societies. We typically advertise this via our Twitter feed (@CSRPeerReview).

Q: Can you serve on a review panel as new investigator?

A: Yes. We look for evidence of expertise and an independent and accomplished research career. Often, in recruiting reviewers, scientific review officers (SRO) do look for extramural funding but that's not always the case – it's somewhat dependent on the particular field – and that extramural funding might be from sources other than the NIH.

Q: Are there review opportunities for associate professors who have not yet submitted an NIH grant but have several publications.

A: We look for evidence of expertise and an independent and accomplished research career. It is not necessarily tied to NIH funding or grant submission.

Q: If I already have a R01, how can I become a reviewer?

A: Please reach out to scientific review officers (SRO) running review panels in your area of expertise and express interest in serving as a reviewer.

Q: I am a mid-career researcher (associate professor). How can I update my expertise in eRA common so a scientific review officer (SRO) can more easily identify me as a potential reviewer.

A: That is a great question but unfortunately individuals cannot update their expertise in eRA Commons. It is not part of the personal profile that individuals control.

Q: If I've received an invitation to serve as a reviewer on a study section, but am not able to this round due to other commitments, how should I respond to the invitation? Will I likely have an opportunity again to review in the future or is that primarily dependent on the nature of the grants that will be reviewed in that meeting?

A: Just explain that you have other commitments that prevent you from serving this round. If you are interested in serving, when you decline, make it clear that you would appreciate an invitation again in the future. Whether you are invited again does depend on the expertise needed, but if your expertise was needed this review cycle, there's a good chance it will be in demand in the future.

Talking to Program Staff

Q: What is the difference between SRO and PO?

A: Good question! SRO = scientific review officer and PO = program officer. The SRO is the designated Federal official in charge of the review process. SROs manage the review process from recruiting the appropriate reviewers to managing the review meeting to capturing the score-driving factors for discussed applications in the Resume of Discussion in the summary statement. POs manage a research portfolio for a funding institute and make recommendations related to funding and interact with investigators to discuss funding priorities and to provide guidance after the review.

Q: Is there a "decision" tree when it comes to which questions to ask as a Program Officer (PO) vs Scientific Review Officer (SRO).

A: No but it's fairly simple. SROs manage the review process and POs are involved in funding recommendations. The SRO is an appropriate contact for questions about the review process up until the review meeting takes place. Your PO is your best contact for all issues after the review takes place. Your PO is also an appropriate contact, before the review meeting (and before grant submission), to find out whether your proposal fits with the institute's programmatic priorities.

Q: If we find a good match on [NIH RePORTER](#), what is the best way to start a conversation with the program official?

A: Just email them 😊

Q: Can the program officer also assist with what is best to include in a response to the summary statement?

A: A program officer can provide general guidance. For guidance in responding point-by-point to a summary statement, it is probably best to find a mentor in your field or at your institution.

Q: For some proposal submissions (such as MIRA), there is a program officer listed under the PA (program announcement) but then after study group meetings, for each study group, there will be a different program officer assigned to that study group. So, which program officer should we contact to discuss the review?

A: Contact the program officer listed for your application; you can find the program officer assigned to your application in eRA Commons and listed on your summary statement.

Q: Is it recommended to reach out to a program officer after you submit a grant to find out when you are likely to hear back?

A: You may do so but there's no particular advantage in touching base with the program officer simply to find out when the advisory council will meet. Making that contact will not have any impact on a funding decision.

Q: For an A1 submission (a resubmission), is the program officer (PO) listed in the summary statement for the initial submission the point of contact?

A: Typically, yes, but you can check in eRA Commons to see what PO is assigned to your resubmission.

Q: What is the vision for an investigator's relationship with a program officer (PO) during early vs. mid vs full established career stages?

A: You should not expect POs to build long-term relationships with investigators. A PO's role is to manage a research portfolio in line with the funding institute's mission and larger priorities. Program officers are assigned to applications based on the research area covered by that PO's portfolio. The PO's portfolio might change over the course of their career at NIH and investigators also don't typically neatly fit into only one area over the course of their career either.

Q: Are there specific program officers or additional resources for the early independence program?

A: You can find out more about the Early Independence Award here:

<https://commonfund.nih.gov/earlyindependence>. The related funding opportunity announcements (FOA) will include program staff contact information.

Q: Should I talk to my program officer (PO) again when I have my introduction ready (already talked to him after I got my summary statement)?

A: There's not a strong reason to touch base again, especially if you already spoke with the PO after receiving the summary statement.

Q: What are the best NIH resources for K awards? Are there program officers who are focused on these types of grants?

A: You can find a wealth of information about K awards here:

<https://researchtraining.nih.gov/programs/career-development>. Usually, program contacts are listed in the funding opportunity announcement for each type of award.

Processes and Procedures in Review

Q: When R15s are reviewed, is it explicitly stated the submission is an R15 if they are reviewed at the same time as R01s?

A: Scientific review officers (SRO) provide training to reviewers in advance of the meeting about how R15 applications should be evaluated. At the review meeting, R15 applications are reviewed together, in a cluster, and SROs remind reviewers before starting that cluster that R15 are not R01s.

Q: How do we address concerns about lack of experience with methodologies that are very new?

A: This is a good question for your mentors or experienced investigators at your institution. Preliminary data are always helpful, as are publications with those methodologies.

Q: Does the Stephen Katz ESI R01 go through the same review process/study sections?

A: They will be reviewed in study sections that also handle applications submitted under other Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA), including R01s submitted under the Parent announcement. However, review criteria will follow that laid out in [PAR-21-038](#) and [PAR-21-039](#).

Q: Can you talk about the Stephen I Katz Early Stage Investigator Research Project Grant? Specifically, what constitutes as a new research direction?

A: Please take a look at the FAQs and powerpoint presentation on this page:

<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/katz-esi-r01.htm>

Q: In the case of reviews of grants that have different review criteria (i.e. DP5, heavy emphasis on institutional support/facilities and a career development plan and evidence of transition into independence) how are reviewers prepared?

A: Scientific review officers (SRO) run pre-meeting teleconferences to train reviewers. In these pre-meeting training sessions, SROs brief reviewers on the review criteria for the proposals they are reviewing. Additionally, at the review meeting itself, different grant mechanisms are grouped together in order of discussion and SROs start the cluster of applications with a brief reminder of the specific review criteria.

Q: What is policy about sending the resubmission to previous reviewers.

A: NIH does automatically assign the same reviewers to the resubmission. NIH offers continuity in review in that the resubmission is assigned to a review panel based on scientific scope, just as the initial submission was. The resubmission is very often reviewed by the same panel that saw the initial submission. The reviewers of the resubmission see the introduction (response to critiques) and the prior summary statement and consider that in their evaluation of the resubmission.

Q: Could you please talk a bit about how the funding opportunity announcements (FOA) that are specifically focused on diversity (like the MOSAIC K99/R00, for example) are reviewed?

A: You can find out more about MOSAIC here:

<https://www.nigms.nih.gov/training/careerdev/Pages/MOSAIC.aspx> and follow the links for the related PARs on that page.

Q: Of the five criteria, which one is the most important to determine the final Impact score?

A: Reviewers are free to weight the five criteria as they see fit.

Q: What is the difference in training between ad-hoc study section reviewers and permanent members of a study section?

A: Scientific review officers typically spend more time training reviewers who are completely new to NIH review and even reviewers who are simply new to their particular study section. Training of permanent members is usually a shorter pre-meeting training session that is focused on any changes in review policy and procedures since the previous review meeting.

Q: Why the reviewers are not identified in the summary statements?

A: The reviewers serving on a study section are usually identified in the roster, published at least 15 days before the review meeting and attached to the summary statement. The specific reviewers assigned to each application are not identified publicly because reviewers need to be free to speak openly and to share their assessment of a grant application in discussion with the rest of the panel, without concern about retribution. Additionally, identifying reviewers of specific applications in advance of the meeting could lead to breaches in review integrity in which investigators might seek to influence the reviewers of their application.

Q: Are the demographics of the reviewers (as a group) available? How does it correlate to the demographics of the US population? What are the efforts to enroll reviewers from minority groups?

A: The demographics of reviewers for CSR are posted. You can find that as well as information on the steps CSR is taking to diversify review panels in the [3 March 2021 Review Matters](#) post.

Q: If your two grants are both assigned to the same study section, what would happen? Is it possible for the same reviewer to review your grant? Can I request one R01 to be assigned to a different study section?

A: The scientific review officer would assign three reviewers to each grant, based on the expertise needed to review it. Applications are assigned to study sections based on the published study section guidelines (research topics covered) and having two applications under review at the same time, by itself, is not a reason for reassignment.

Q: How about blinding the reviews? I've heard being in a larger university helps you to get funded vs being a part of a smaller university.

A: CSR is collaborating with The Common Fund to test an anonymized review process. Please see [the 27 May 2020 Open Mike](#) post for information. An external contractor was hired to assess the process; NIH is just beginning to get results back. We are concerned about positive bias that might come along with grant submission from a large, well-recognized university and we plan to address this through bias awareness training for reviewers and for scientific review officers (SRO). You can read more about these efforts in the [3 March 2021 Review Matters](#) post.

Q: Are reviews going to be done in person in the future or will they always be virtual from now on?

A: We anticipate holding some review meetings in person again, once gathering in person no longer carries a significant COVID-19 risk. We also anticipate running more meetings remotely, via Zoom, than we had before the pandemic. There are pros and cons to each modality and so, post-pandemic review is likely to utilize both in-person and Zoom meeting formats.

Review Outcomes

Q: How does the percentile relate to the impact score?

A: Whether an application is percentiled or not depends on the grant mechanism (e.g. R01 vs. R21) and the funding institute. Many applications are percentiled. Percentiling is a way to take into account variations in scoring behavior between different study sections so a percentile's relationship to impact score varies by study section.

Q: I have submitted an application, it has an impact score, but not a percentile. Does it mean that it will not be funded?

A: No. A decision to percentile has nothing to do with whether an application will be funded. Each funding institute has different rules about what types of grants are percentiled.

Q: To clarify, do all submitted proposals get a summary statement, or only those in the top half?

A: All submitted proposal receive a written critique from each of the three assigned reviewers. Those applications that are discussed at the review meeting, usually the top 50% in terms of preliminary overall impact score, also receive a Resume of Discussion which summarizes what happened in the discussion and summarizes the score-driving factors.

Q: How long does it take to get a notice of award (NOA) after the advisory council (AC) meeting?

A: It varies. You may contact your program officer and ask.

Q: If the application is recommended for funding at the advisory council review, what other steps the application goes through and how long does it take to get funded after the decision has been made?

A: This is a question for program staff – speak with your assigned program officer.

Q: For K award only impact scores are considered? What impact scores are fundable?

A: The answer to both these questions is entirely dependent on the particular funding institute to which the application is assigned. Different funding institutes have made different decisions about whether to

percentile K awards. If the mechanism is percentiled, percentiles are considered. If not, impact scores are considered. What score is “fundable” depends on the funding institute that the application is assigned to and the pay lines at that institute.

Q: If the scientific committee has already met, the score posted, and the advisory council meeting is pending, can we say it has been discussed/will be discussed?

A: If you received a score, your application was discussed and your summary statement with 3 critiques and a resume of discussion will be released typically within 30 days of the review meeting.

Q: For K awards, if the summary statement says one’s proposal has medium impact, does that suggest it is not going to be funded? What is the range of fundable impact score?

A: Pay lines vary by funding institute. You should speak with your program officer.