Review Criteria for NIH R Series Proposals

The mission of the NIH is to support science in pursuit of knowledge about the biology and behavior of living systems and to apply that knowledge to extend healthy life and reduce the burdens of illness and disability. As part of this mission, applications submitted to the NIH for grants or cooperative agreements to support biomedical and behavioral research are evaluated for scientific and technical merit through the NIH peer review system.

Overall Impact

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following five core review criteria, and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed).

Core Review Criteria

Reviewers will consider each of the five review criteria below in the determination of scientific and technical merit, and give a separate score for each. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.

Significance

Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

Investigator(s)

Are the PD/PIs, collaborators, and other researchers well suited to the project? If Early Stage Investigators or New Investigators, do they have appropriate experience and training? If established, have they demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced their field(s)? If the project is collaborative or multi-PD/PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise; are their leadership approach, governance and organizational structure appropriate for the project?

Innovation

Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions? Are the concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions novel to one field of research or novel in a broad sense? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?

Approach

Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?
If the project involves clinical research, are the plans for 1) protection of human subjects from research risks, and 2) inclusion of minorities and members of both sexes/genders, as well as the inclusion of children, justified in terms of the scientific goals and research strategy proposed?

Environment

Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Are the institutional support, equipment and other physical resources available to the investigators adequate for the project proposed? Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?

Additional Review Criteria

As applicable for the project proposed, reviewers will **consider** the following additional items in the determination of scientific and technical merit, but will not give separate scores for these items**.**

Resubmission Applications

When reviewing a Resubmission application (formerly called an amended application), the committee will evaluate the application as now presented, taking into consideration the responses to comments from the previous scientific review group and changes made to the project.

Renewal Applications

When reviewing a Renewal application (formerly called a competing continuation application), the committee will consider the progress made in the last funding period.

Score Chart Used by Reviewers

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Strengths/Weaknesses
High Impact	1	Exceptional	Strengths
High Impact	2	Outstanding	
High Impact	3	Excellent	
Moderate Impact	4	Very Good	
Moderate Impact	5	Good	
Moderate Impact	6	Satisfactory	
Low Impact	7	Fair	
Low Impact	8	Marginal	
Low Impact	9	Poor	Weaknesses

Non-numeric score options: NR = Not Recommended for Further Consideration, DF = Deferred, AB = Abstention, CF = Conflict, NP = Not Present, ND=Not Discussed

Additional Guidance on Strengths and Weaknesses

The graphical representation of strengths and weaknesses (the far right column) is provided to illustrate the relative balance of strengths and weaknesses associated with each rating score. Reviewers should consider not only the relative number of strengths and weaknesses noted, but also the importance of them to the overall impact. For example, a major strength may outweigh many minor and correctable weaknesses. The table below provides additional guidance to assist reviewers in determining their ratings.

Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses

Minor Weakness: An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact
Moderate Weakness: A weakness that lessens impact. Major Weakness: A weakness that severely limits impact

Reviewer Scoring Template: RPG/R01/R03/R15/R21 Review

Application #:

Principal Investigator(s):

OVERALL IMPACT

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved, in consideration of the following five scored review criteria, and additional review criteria. An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact.

Overall Impact *Write a paragraph summarizing the factors that informed your Overall Impact score.*

SCORED REVIEW CRITERIA

Reviewers will consider each of the five review criteria below in the determination of scientific and technical merit, and give a separate score for each.

1. Significance
Strengths •   **Weaknesses** •

2. Investigator(s)
Strengths •   **Weaknesses** •

3. Innovation
Strengths •   **Weaknesses** •

4. Approach

Strengths
 	
    ●
 	
Weaknesses
 	
    ●

5. Environment

Strengths
 	
    ●
 	
Weaknesses
 	
    ●

ADDITIONAL REVIEW CRITERIA

As applicable for the project proposed, reviewers will consider the following additional items in the determination of scientific and technical merit, but will not give separate scores for these items**.**

— Responses for Protections for Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animals, and Biohazards **are required for all applications**.
— A response for Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children **is required** for applications proposing Human Subjects Research.

Protections for Human Subjects

Click Here to Select
 	
Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):
 	
     •
 	
Data and Safety Monitoring Plan (Applicable for Clinical Trials Only):
 	
     Click Here to Select
 	
     Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):
 	
          ○

Inclusion of Women, Minorities and Children Applicable Only for Human Subjects Research
Click Here to Select Gender Code Click Here to Select Minority Code Click Here to Select Children Code Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):   •

Vertebrate Animals
Click Here to Select Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):   •

Biohazards
Click Here to Select Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):   •

Resubmission
Comments (if applicable):   •

Renewal

Comments (if applicable):
•

Revision
Comments (if applicable):
•

ADDITIONAL REVIEW CONSIDERATIONS

As applicable for the project proposed, reviewers will address each of the following items, but will not give scores for these items and should not consider them in providing an overall impact/priority score.

Applications from Foreign Organizations
Click Here to Select
Comments (Required Unless Not Applicable):
•

Select Agents
Click Here to Select
Comments (Required if Unacceptable):
•

Resource Sharing Plans
Click Here to Select
Comments (Required if Unacceptable):
•

Budget and Period of Support
Click Here to Select
Recommended budget modifications or possible overlap identified:
•

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS TO APPLICANT

Reviewers may provide guidance to the applicant or recommend against resubmission without fundamental revision.

Additional Comments to Applicant (Optional)
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