

Chair Orientation

The Chairperson (Chair) of a Scientific Review Group (SRG) plays a key role in the functioning and success of the peer review process. This orientation is designed to provide an overview of the responsibilities of the Chairperson to ensure effective leadership.

The Scientific Review Officer (SRO) is the Designated Federal Official who is responsible for managing the peer review process in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policy. Working in partnership with the SRO, the Chair will help facilitate a review process of the highest quality and fairness.

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PRE-MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Discuss meeting plans with the SRO
- Support the SRO in reminding reviewers to adhere to administrative topics (e.g., implementation of new review procedures, scoring across the appropriate and full range of possibilities, etc.)
- Know the review criteria and considerations relevant for the particular Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA)
- Assist the SRO in training new members about procedural aspects of the review process (with particular attention to writing and presenting critiques)
- Become familiar with all applications being reviewed at the meeting
- Prepare to facilitate discussion by reading critiques for applications with wide divergence in preliminary scores

MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES

General Responsibilities at the Meeting

- Prepare a few brief comments for the beginning of the meeting – to introduce yourself to reviewers unfamiliar with you and to make a few suggestions (e.g., not reading critiques)
- Facilitate discussion that allows all scientific points to be heard
- Implement and operate within NIH review regulations, policies, and procedures
- Set a professional, respectful, and collegial tone for the meeting
- Engage SRG members during discussions
- Manage time efficiently by commenting that there seems to be considerable consensus – or differences of opinion – with the important points clearly presented. Do not end discussions prematurely; all major issues must be aired, and differences of opinion must be explained. Reviewers can respectfully request an extension of the discussion regarding a particular issue.
- Ensure that each review is fair, equitable and free of bias
 - Speak to the SRO about any concerns, calling a (brief) recess, if necessary
- *Beware of personal bias.* The Chair may state personal scientific opinions, but may not champion favored ideas or areas of science or disparage others.

- Ask the SRO to explain to you any plan he or she may have for managing the meeting when you have a Conflict of Interest (COI) or are an assigned reviewer for an application. Two choices are (1) the rotation of the chair around the review table, passing the Chair's Guide to the person who will function as chair for the review of an application, and (2) assigning a "substitute" chair for the meeting
- Consult with the SRO on inadequate reviews or irregularities
- Be prepared for unexpected changes in the order of review, following the SRO's lead in what needs to be reviewed next.
- Monitor discussion threads if the application is reviewed during an Internet Assisted Meeting
- Follow the order of review, as communicated by the SRO

Responsibilities for Each Discussed Application

- Announce the FOA if there are two or more funding mechanisms being reviewed at the meeting. Ask the SRO if s/he has any comments to make about the FOA or mechanism.
- Announce the application that is being reviewed by PI's name and title, speaking clearly into the microphone, if being used, so that those on the phone know which application is being reviewed
- Ask reviewers who have COI with the application to leave the room and wait until s/he exits before proceeding
- Announce reviewers by name
- Ensure that reviewers speak clearly into microphones or telephones
- Ask assigned reviewers and discussants to provide their preliminary scores
- Ask assigned reviewers and discussants to provide concise reviews of applications with emphasis on its impact, strengths, and weaknesses
- Open the review for further discussion by all members of the panel
- If members of the panel do not raise the issue, ask for an explanation when it seems that there is a considerable discrepancy between a reviewer's preliminary score and the enthusiasm in his/her comments.
- Ask for any comments and allow for discussion of any concerns about each of the Additional Review Criteria (including human subject research, vertebrate animal research, or biohazards) prior to scoring
- Briefly summarize the discussion, pointing out any disagreements among the reviewers
- Ask for final scores from assigned reviewers and discussants
- Ask any reviewer scoring outside the stated range to declare their intention to do so and to inform the panel of the issue that compelled their score
- Ask reviewers to enter scores in IAR repeating PI's name and application title
- Remind reviewers to modify their written critiques and criterion scores in light of the discussion
- After final scores have been entered, ask about Additional Review Considerations (including budget recommendations)

POST-MEETING RESPONSIBILITIES

- Sign and Date the meeting minutes
- Be available to consult with the SRO as needed