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Enhancing Peer Review Initiative

Survey of Peer Reviewers

VERSION A

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Introduction

This survey of NIH peer reviewers is to help examine **NIH's Enhancing Peer Review Initiative** (http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov/). The objectives of the initiative are to engage the best reviewers, improve the quality and transparency of peer review, and ensure balanced and fair reviews. This is the first annual "point in time" survey to gather reviewers' opinions about the peer review process. This information will be useful in assessing the changes introduced by the Enhancing Peer Review Initiative and may be used to further improve the peer review process.

You have been **randomly selected** to participate in this survey from a pool of individuals who served as peer reviewers for NIH at least once from May 2008 through September 2009. We are interested in the opinions of reviewers with different levels of peer review experience. Even if you have limited experience reviewing grant applications, **your opinions are very important to us.**

The survey should take approximately 15 minutes to complete. You can stop at any point and continue at another time. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give the answer that best describes your opinion. While we would like you to answer all the questions in this survey, you may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to complete the survey, your responses will remain **anonymous**. Your responses will **not** be linked to your name and will **not** be made known to NIH staff or grant applicants. They will not be used to assess the performance of individual NIH Institutes, Centers, or Scientific Review Groups. Aggregate responses will be used to guide NIH management in refining enhancements to the peer review process.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

Section A: Your Experiences as a Peer Reviewer

A1. In what capacity have you ever served as a NIH peer reviewer? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ Regular reviewer or "appointed" member of a chartered scientific review group (study section)
  - A reviewer who agrees to serve a fixed duration (typically 4-6 years); may also be called a "charter" or "permanent" reviewer
- ☐ *Ad hoc* or "temporary" reviewer
  - An *ad hoc* member of a scientific review group (study section) or Special Emphasis Panel (SEP)

A2. For which component(s) of NIH have you ever been a peer reviewer? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ Center for Scientific Review (CSR)
- ☐ One or more NIH Institutes/Centers (ICs) (e.g., NCI, NIAID)

IF YOU ONLY SELECTED: *Ad hoc* or "temporary" reviewer FOR QUESTION A1, GO TO QUESTION A5; OTHERWISE CONTINUE.

A3. Are you currently serving as a regular reviewer on a chartered scientific review group (study section) for NIH?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

A4. As a regular reviewer, how many full terms (typically 4 to 6 years each) have you completed for NIH?

- ○ 0 terms
- ○ 1 term
- ○ 2 terms
- ○ 3 terms
- ○ 4 or more terms

IF YOU SELECTED: *Ad hoc* or "temporary" reviewer TO QUESTION A1, CONTINUE; OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION A6.

A5. As an *ad hoc* reviewer, in how many review meetings did you serve for NIH from May **2008** to September **2009**?

- ○ 0 meetings
- ○ 1 meeting
- ○ 2 meetings
- ○ 3 or more meetings

A6. In which calendar years have you served as a peer reviewer for NIH, including all peer review service as a regular reviewer and as an *ad hoc* reviewer? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ 2009
- ☐ 2008
- ☐ 2007
- ☐ 2006
- ☐ 2005
- ☐ 2000 to 2004
- ☐ 1995 to 1999
- ☐ 1990 to 1994
- ☐ 1985 to 1989
- ☐ 1980 to 1984
- ☐ 1975 to 1979
- ☐ Before 1975

A7. Now, please think about the time period May **2009** through September **2009**.

During this time, did you serve as a regular and/or an *ad hoc* reviewer for NIH?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No: **Stop! You should complete the alternate survey (Version B). Please do not complete Version A.**

A8. Since May **2009**, what type(s) of grant applications have you reviewed? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ Grant applications related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, such as the Challenge grants program and Grand Opportunities "GO" grants program
- ☐ Regular (non-ARRA) grant applications

Section B: Review Process and Procedures

In answering the questions in this section, please consider your experience with the enhanced peer review procedures **implemented in 2009**, regardless of whether they were applied in reviewing regular or ARRA grant applications.

Please refer to this table when answering the following questions.

Table 1. The NIH Grant Application Scoring System

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

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

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.

Based on your most recent review experience using the new scoring procedures, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

B1a. The 1 to 9 rating scale had sufficient range for me to communicate meaningful differences in the quality of the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Please refer to Table 1 when answering the following questions.

Based on your most recent review experience using the new scoring procedures, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B1b. The 1 to 9 rating scale allowed me to communicate strengths and weaknesses for each review criterion.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B1c. The descriptors for the 1 to 9 rating scale (exceptional to poor) helped me to determine the criterion scores for the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B1d. The descriptors for the 1 to 9 rating scale (exceptional to poor) helped me to determine the overall impact/priority scores for the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Please refer to Table 1 when answering the following questions.

Based on your most recent review experience using the new scoring procedures, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B1e. Additional guidance on strengths and weaknesses for each score assisted me in determining the criterion scores for the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B1f. Additional guidance on strengths and weaknesses for each score assisted me in determining the overall impact/priority scores for the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

In answering the questions in this section, please consider your experience with the enhanced peer review procedures **implemented in 2009**, regardless of whether they were applied in reviewing regular or ARRA grant applications.

Please refer to Table 2 when answering the following questions.

Table 2. Example of a Structured Critique Template

RPG/R01/R03/R15/R21 Review

If you cannot access the hyperlinks below,
visit http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/critiques/rpg.htm.

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
Strengths • **Weaknesses** •

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** •

Based on your most recent review experience using the structured critique templates (an example is shown here), please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

B2a. The structured critique templates allowed me to fully describe my evaluations of the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Please refer to Table 2 when answering the following questions.

Based on your most recent review experience using the structured critique templates (an example is provided below), please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B2b. The bulleted format in the structured critique templates was adequate for capturing the strengths and weaknesses of the applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B2c. The structured critique templates helped me complete my critiques efficiently.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Based on your most recent review experience involving not discussed (ND) applications, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

B3a. The structured critiques helped the reviewers to decide whether or not to discuss an application.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Based on your most recent review experience involving not discussed (ND) applications, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B3b. The bulleted format in the structured critiques helped me communicate to the applicants why their applications were not discussed.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B3c. The criterion scores helped me communicate to the applicants why their applications were not discussed.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Based on your most recent review experience, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statement.

B4a. My scientific expertise was necessary and appropriately used in the review process.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

Based on your most recent review experience, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B4b. The other review group members seemed to be experts in their fields.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B4c. The format and duration of the discussion was sufficient for reviewers not assigned to evaluate an application to be able to cast well-informed votes.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B4d. An appropriate amount of time was spent discussing the potential impact of the applicants' research.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

REFER TO YOUR RESPONSE TO QUESTION A8 IN SECTION A.

IF YOU SELECTED: Grant applications related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act AND DID NOT SELECT: Regular (non-ARRA) grant applications, GO TO QUESTION B5; OTHERWISE CONTINUE.

B4e. Clustering applications from New and Early Stage Investigators resulted in a more consistent review of those applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B4f. Clustering clinical applications (those involving human subjects) resulted in a more consistent review of those applications.

- ○ Strongly agree
- ○ Agree
- ○ Neither agree nor disagree
- ○ Disagree
- ○ Strongly disagree
- ○ Not applicable

B5. How well did the reviewer orientation and any training materials you received prepare you to review applications using the new procedures, such as the 1 to 9 scoring scale, scoring of individual review criteria, and structured critique templates?

- ○ Very well
- ○ Somewhat well
- ○ Not well at all

Section C: Your Opinions about the NIH Peer Review Process Since 2009

When answering the questions in this section, please think of the **peer review process at NIH after enhancements were made in 2009,** the one under which your most recent peer review service occurred (regardless of whether it was related to regular or ARRA grant applications).

C1. Overall, which peer review system do you prefer — the new system (with enhancements) or the old system (without enhancements)?

- ○ New system
- ○ Old system
- ○ No preference between the new or the old systems
- ○ Not applicable — no experience with new system

C2. How fair is the peer review process at NIH **after enhancements were made in 2009**?

- ○ Very fair
- ○ Somewhat fair
- ○ Neither fair nor unfair
- ○ Somewhat unfair
- ○ Very unfair

C3. How satisfied are you with the peer review process at NIH **after enhancements were made in 2009**?

- ○ Very satisfied
- ○ Somewhat satisfied
- ○ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- ○ Somewhat dissatisfied
- ○ Very dissatisfied

Section D: Peer Review Service

IF YOU SELECTED: *Ad hoc* or "temporary" reviewer FOR QUESTION A1 IN SECTION A, CONTINUE; OTHERWISE GO TO QUESTION D2.

D1. Below are three aspects of the peer review process that may affect individuals' willingness to serve as *ad hoc* or "temporary" reviewers, such as *ad hoc* members of a standing review group or reviewers for a Special Emphasis Panel (SEP).

Please rate the importance to which each of the following affects your willingness to serve in the future as an *ad hoc* reviewer.

		Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Not sure/not applicable
D1a.	The time commitment required to prepare for the meeting (read, assess, and critique applications)	○	○	○	○
D1b.	The time commitment required to attend review meetings/discussions	○	○	○	○
D1c.	The time commitment required to travel in order to attend meetings	○	○	○	○

IF YOU SELECTED: Regular reviewer or "appointed" member of a chartered scientific review group (study section) FOR QUESTION A1 IN SECTION A CONTINUE; OTHERWISE GO TO SECTION E.

D2. Below are four aspects of the peer review process that may affect individuals' willingness to serve as regular or "appointed" members of a chartered scientific review group (study section).

Please rate the importance to which each of the following affects your willingness to serve in the future as a regular reviewer.

		Very important	Somewhat important	Not at all important	Not sure/not applicable
D2a.	The requirement for a multi-year commitment	○	○	○	○
D2b.	The time commitment required to prepare for the meeting (read, assess, and critique applications)	○	○	○	○
D2c.	The time commitment required to attend review meetings/discussions	○	○	○	○
D2d.	The time commitment required to travel in order to attend meetings	○	○	○	○

Section E: Background

As a reminder, the information you provide in this survey will remain anonymous. No individual respondents will be identified, and all responses will be summarized and reported in aggregate form.

E1. What type of organization do you work for? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ University
- ☐ Research Foundation
- ☐ Private Sector/For-profit Organization
- ☐ Hospital/Medical Center
- ☐ Federal, State, or Local Government Agency
- ☐ Other Non-profit Organization
- ☐ Other (Specify): _____

E2. What is your job title or position?

- ○ Professor
- ○ Associate Professor
- ○ Assistant Professor
- ○ Adjunct Professor
- ○ Senior Scientist
- ○ Other (Specify): _____

E3. Have you ever submitted a research grant application to NIH as a Principal Investigator (PI) for a single-PI or multiple-PI grant?

> **NIH Definition of a Principal Investigator:** The individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. The applicant organization may designate multiple individuals as PDs/PIs [Program Directors/Principal Investigators] who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the project, intellectually and logistically. Each PD/PI is responsible and accountable to the applicant organization, or, as appropriate, to a collaborating organization, for the proper conduct of the project or program including the submission of all required reports. The presence of more than one identified PD/PI on an application or award diminishes neither the responsibility nor the accountability of any individual PD/PI.

- ○ Yes
- ○ No **(GO TO QUESTION E9)**

E4. When did you submit your first research grant application to NIH as a PI for a single-PI or multiple-PI grant?

- ○ 2008 to 2009
- ○ 2005 to 2007
- ○ 2002 to 2004
- ○ 1999 to 2001
- ○ 1996 to 1998
- ○ 1993 to 1995
- ○ 1990 to 1992
- ○ Prior to 1990

E5. As a PI, have you ever received an R01, R03, or R21 grant from NIH? (Please include single-PI grants and multiple-PI grants.)

- ○ Yes
- ○ No **(GO TO QUESTION E7)**

E6. In total, how many years of NIH funding have you received as a PI on R01, R03, and R21 grants? (Please include single-PI grants and multiple-PI grants.)

Enter total number of years here: [ ][ ]

E7. In which of the following fiscal years did you receive **any type of NIH funding** as a PI? (Please include single-PI grants and multiple-PI grants.)

Examples of NIH funding include research grants (R series), program project/center grants (P series), career development awards (K series), research training and fellowships (T and F series), and SBIR/STTR grants/contracts. **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ FY 2009 (October 2008 to September 2009)
- ☐ FY 2008 (October 2007 to September 2008)
- ☐ FY 2007 (October 2006 to September 2007)
- ☐ Did not receive NIH funding for the fiscal years listed

E8. Did you submit any applications as a PI in response to NIH funding opportunity announcements related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009, such as the Challenge grants program and the Grand Opportunities "GO" grants program?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

E9. Please indicate the degree(s) you have. **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ Ph.D. or other research doctorate
- ☐ M.D.
- ☐ D.D.S.
- ☐ D.V.M. or V.M.D.
- ☐ Other (Specify): _____

E10. What is your age?

- ○ Under 35
- ○ 35 to 40
- ○ 41 to 45
- ○ 46 to 50
- ○ 51 to 55
- ○ 56 to 60
- ○ 61 to 65
- ○ 66 to 70
- ○ Over 70

E11. What is your gender?

- ○ Female
- ○ Male

E12. What is your ethnicity?

- ○ Hispanic or Latino
- ○ Not Hispanic or Latino

E13. What is your race? **Select all that apply.**

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White

Thank you very much for completing the survey!

For more information about the peer review changes that have been implemented at NIH, please visit http://enhancing-peer-review.nih.gov/faqs.html.

If you have any ideas for improving the peer review process at NIH, please enter your suggestions here:

You may select “Submit by Email” to electronically submit your completed questionnaire.
OR
You may select “Print Form” to print the pdf version of the survey.

To submit and/or print, please go back to the top of this form and select either “Submit by Email” or “Print Form.”

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