

Center for Scientific Review

National Institutes of Health

Referral & Review

GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW OF SHARED INSTRUMENTATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

BACKGROUND

The review of proposals for the Shared Instrumentation Program of the National Center for Research Resources (NCRR) requires a very different approach from that used for the review of other types of applications submitted to the National Institutes of Health. The program announcement for this grant mechanism should be examined carefully prior to reviewing any applications, paying particular attention to the sections on review procedures and criteria. (<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-04-029.html>)

Prepare your reviews according to the following headings. You may add more comments if you like, but please organize your reviews in the format indicated below. If this is an amended application, address the applicant's response to the earlier summary statement.

SECTIONS OF THE SUMMARY STATEMENT

RESUME: This is a brief statement on the nature of the application (instrument requested, number of users, type of research) and general comments on the overall need of the users which led you to your final recommendation and level of enthusiasm.

CRITIQUE

NEED/ENHANCEMENT OF NIH-SUPPORTED RESEARCH: What similar and/or related instruments are available to the users? For existing instruments, describe and evaluate the location, working conditions, time available for use, etc. What are the specific reasons for requesting the acquisition or upgrading of the instrumentation? For example, is present instrumentation unavailable for use, geographically remote, heavily used, inadequate in resolution or sophistication, or nonexistent? Is the requested instrument appropriate with respect to basic capabilities, accessories, peripherals, interfaces, compatibility with existing equipment, etc.?

How would the research project of each major user be enhanced? Would the instrument improve research capability, increase productivity, accelerate current progress, and/or expand the scope of ongoing studies?

Be evaluative not descriptive. Special emphasis should be given to the impact on NIH-funded research. Indicate the Institute or Center supporting each NIH-funded project.

EXPERTISE: How will the operation and maintenance of the instrument be supervised? Is the staff adequately trained and experienced? If not, can this deficiency be easily remedied? How will new users be trained?

ORGANIZATION: Evaluate the organizational plan to administer the grant and provide for equitable use of the instrumentation. Are the plans appropriate and adequate? How will day-to-day operation be managed? Are arrangements for sharing adequate and equitable?

CONTINUING COMMITMENT: Evaluate the institution's plans for continued support and maintenance of the instrument. Are the plans adequate? Is it clear that the instrument will be appropriately supported and maintained during the post-award period? Cost sharing of the purchase price is not to be considered as a continuing commitment by the applicant institution.

BENEFIT TO THE RESEARCH COMMUNITY: Will the instrument requested benefit the overall research community and have a significant impact on NIH-funded research?

BUDGET: Base your budget recommendation on the total cost of upgrading or acquiring an appropriately equipped, but cost-effective, instrument. Recommend deletions or changes for inappropriate items. Do not concern yourself with the administrative cost floor or ceiling given in the program announcement. Please be specific in describing the requisite capabilities of an instrument appropriate to the needs of the investigators. This information should be valuable not only for NCR staff in negotiating the terms of an award, but also to investigators who may have more limited experience than you with the requested instrumentation. You are to pass judgment on the need for and appropriateness of the requested instrumentation, not the research itself; these latter judgments have been rendered by other Study Sections.

STUDY SECTION MEETING PROCEDURES:

Applications may be subjected to streamlined review procedures. As an application comes up for discussion, the assigned reviewers will state their levels (or ranges) of enthusiasm using numbers from 1.0 (best) to 5.0 (worst). The median score of the group of applications being reviewed should be 3.0. The budget will be considered only after the application has been fully discussed and scored. Summary statements for all applications will consist of the unedited critiques provided by the assigned reviewers and a Resume and Summary of Discussion written by the Scientific Review Administrator after the meeting. Therefore, if reviewers change their opinions during the discussion, they should amend their written comments to reflect their opinions at the time of assigning a score to the application.