Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health

General Information For Site Visit Reviewers

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Conflict Of Interest

A Scientific Review Group (SRG) may not review an application in which one of its members is the Principal Investigator (PI) or is indicated to receive compensation. In addition, when a member's spouse, parent, or child is named in a grant application as the PI, the member's Study Section may not review the application.

Confidentiality

1. All applications and supporting materials are "privileged information," to be distributed only to reviewers and NIH staff.

2. Site visit reviewers should not contact an applicant about an application. Any reviewer seeking more specific information about an application should contact the Scientific Review Administrator (SRA).

3. Under no circumstances should a reviewer advise an applicant regarding an application or about any recommendation that the site visit team/special Study Section may make.

4. Reviewers are not to discuss the proceedings or the outcome of the review meetings with anyone at any time in the future.

Reviewer Duties

1. Prior to the site visit, each reviewer should study thoroughly the application, supporting documents, and other information received from NIH. In general, a reviewer is specifically responsible for that area of the application reflecting her/his expertise. Writing assignments—in preliminary form—should be completed before the site visit, and duplicate hard copies, plus a computer disk, should be brought to the site visit.

2. If a reviewer needs clarification regarding an assignment, s/he should contact the SRA.

3. Also contact the SRA where a need is perceived to supplement expert knowledge in some aspect of the application.

The Visit

The SRA is the designated Federal official and is responsible for ensuring that NIH policies and procedures are followed. The SRA works with the Chair and PI to arrange laboratory tours and executive sessions. The Chair acts as moderator and is responsible for the scientific conduct of the meeting.

The purpose of the site visit is to collect information needed to evaluate the grant application. However, an applicant's impressions of the visit are also very important. An applicant should feel that s/he received an adequate opportunity to make an effective presentation, as well as a fair and informed appraisal of her/his proposal. *Note*: While reviewers are responsible for obtaining information necessary to complete the evaluation process, avoid wording questions or statements that might be construed as demonstrating preconceived opinions or bias.

The Report

The site visit report is written before the reviewers disband. It includes a recommendation on the merits of the proposal and a priority score rating. Prior to adjournment, individual critiques are read, discussed, and modified as desired by the entire panel.