

4. Summary of Responsibilities

Office of the Administrator

Provides executive-level oversight of the ARS Peer Review Process, communicating Agency policy and procedures for peer review to internal and external parties. Stays abreast of program performance and issues and makes adjustments to the Peer Review Process as necessary. Provides annual updates on the Peer Review Process to the Research, Extension, Education, Economics Advisory Board, and Congressional committees. Represents ARS in matters related to peer review. Selects Scientific Quality Review Officer on an annual basis.

Area Directors

Monitor the progress of research project plans developed for various National Programs. Review and approve project plans for submission to the National Program Staff and the OSQR. Provide direction and instruction to ARS researchers in meeting scientific quality requirements and in addressing the recommendations and suggestions of peer reviewers. Provide input into the Peer Review Process-related policies and procedures.

Area Directors also:

- Identify and/or approve members of research teams
- Concur with National Program recommendations to add or delete projects from the group of projects being peer reviewed
- Initiate peer review approval records in the Research Management Information System and the implementation of project plans
- Review and approve project plan prospectuses
- Review and approve all project plans, as well as gain input and approval from National Program Teams.
- Manage lines of peer review-related communication involving Area laboratories
- Lead the interpretation and use of peer reviews

Associate Deputy Administrators and National Program Teams

Provide programmatic directions to lead scientists through the Area Director. National Program Teams, guided by a designated leader, give lead scientists advice on their project's objectives and approach early in the Peer Review Process, often using the project plan prospectus as a communication tool. Review research project plans to verify adherence to programmatic direction and provide input to the OSQR in determining scientific discipline requirements for panels. Provide materials and information about a National Program to OSQR for reviewer use. Provide an overview of the National Program to a review panel concerning the Program's design, influence of workshops, assignments of and relationships between projects.

National Program Teams also:

- Review and approve list of projects to be peer reviewed
- Give scientific direction to lead scientists
- Distribute directions and schedule to initiate peer review sessions
- Help managers to recognize the research and Program direction of each project
- Take time to study the methodology across projects
- Look for duplication and overlap.

Research Leaders, Lead Scientists, and Research Teams

Develop a consensus with National Program Teams on each project's direction and scope by documenting the project's relevance to the National Program Action Plan and scientific approach to addressing objectives. Develop research project plans according to programmatic direction provided by the National Program Team and according to guidelines established by the OSQR. Submit project plans for approval by the Center, Institute, or Lab Director, National Program Leader, and Area Director. Review peer review recommendations and make appropriate modifications to research project plans for submission to the Area Director and National Program Team. Submit formal responses to recommendations made by peer reviewers to OSQR.

Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR)

Has primary responsibility for planning and facilitating high quality scientific and technical peer review of all Agency prospective research project plans. Manages the Peer Review Process, including policies, processes, and procedures. Centrally plans and conducts consolidated panel peer review sessions for projects within each National Program and coordinates ad hoc reviews of individual projects as necessary. Reports to the Associate Administrator. The OSQR team consists of the Scientific Quality Review Officer, Peer Review Program Coordinator, and two assistants.

Scientific Quality Review Officer (SQR Officer)

Provides professional scientific oversight of the Peer Review Process and panel operations. Enforces Agency policy and requirements regarding the Peer Review Process. Oversees the transfer of peer review recommendations from peer reviewers to Area Directors, and the transfer of ARS responses to panel recommendations to peer reviewers.

Peer Review Program Coordinator

Manages the day-to-day operations of the Peer Review Process. Communicates and enforces Agency policy and requirements regarding peer review. Develops review schedules and provides initial peer review direction to National Program Leaders, Area Offices, and researchers. Makes logistical arrangements for panel peer reviews and coordinates the flow of information and materials to and from reviewers. Creates and maintains official Agency records concerning peer review throughout the life of the peer-reviewed project (plus an additional two years). Performs administrative duties to support the Peer Review Process, including processing reimbursements for reviewer expenses and external reviewer stipends.

During each peer review session, the OSQR team:

- Sets key deadlines
- Retains panel chairpersons (panel chair)
- Oversees panel chairs in the selection of panel peer reviewers
- Provides orientation to panel chairs and panels
- Assists panel chairs in retaining ad hoc peer reviewers
- Maintains the official public record of all peer review-related documents and the process of retaining panel chairs and peer reviewers
- Ensures integrity in the recommendation development and judgement process

- Reports results of peer review of individual project plans to Area Directors and National Program Staff Management
- Certifies each ARS peer review response and communicates responses back to panel
- Routinely provides peer review orientations for National Program Teams, and as requested for new scientists, lead scientists, research leaders, administrative staff, and other employees

Comments
for Section 12
Summary of Responsibilities

**ARS Organizational Elements
Involved in Research
Planning and Peer Review**

