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 in order 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 meeting
• 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

• Facilitate discussion that allows all scientific points to be heard
• Implement and operate within NIH review regulations, policies, and procedures
• Set a professional tone for the discussion
• Engage SRG members during discussions
• Manage time efficiently, but do not end discussions prematurely - all major issues must be aired, and explanations for differences of opinion must be clear to everyone present
• Ensure that each review is fair, equitable and free of bias
  • Speak to the SRO about any concerns
• Beware of personal bias. The Chair may state personal scientific opinions, but may not champion favored ideas or areas of science over others
• To allow for third-party moderation of review discussions, the SRO may appoint an “alternate” Chair when the Chairperson is assigned as a reviewer/discussant on an application
• Consult with the SRO on inadequate reviews or irregularities
• 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 application that is being reviewed
• Announce reviewers by name
• Ensure that reviewers speak clearly into microphones or telephones
• Ask assigned reviewers and discussants to provide their initial level of enthusiasm or preliminary score
• 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
• Ask for any comments 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
• 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

Post-meeting Discussion with the SRO
• Sign and Date the meeting minutes
• Consult on writing Resume and Summary of Discussion sections, particularly in cases where the SRO needs confirmation that it accurately reflects the final recommendations of the SRG
• Be available to consult with the SRO as needed