Background & Motivations for Changes to Fellowships

- NIH receives ~6,500 fellowship applications annually

- In recent years, applicants and reviewers alike voiced concerns that fellowship reviews may disadvantage some applicants who are in fact highly qualified.

- CSR is committed to implement changes to the peer review process to make it more fair, effective and efficient

- The concerns prompted CSR to lead an effort to revise the fellowship application and review process, with significant input form the external community.

Objectives of the Changes

1. **Better focus reviewer attention on three key assessments**: the fellowship candidate's preparedness and potential, research training plan, and commitment to the candidate.

2. **Ensure that a broad range of candidates and research training contexts** can be recognized as meritorious by clarifying and simplifying the language in the application and review criteria.

3. **Reduce bias in review** by emphasizing the commitment to the candidate, without undue consideration of sponsor and institutional reputation.

NIH Center for Scientific Review

Objectives of the Changes

Our overarching goal was to level the playing field so that a broad range of candidates and research training contexts can be recognized as meritorious.

To do so, changes were made to the review criteria and the application to:

1. **Better focus reviewer attention on three key assessments:** the fellowship candidate's preparedness and potential, research training plan, and commitment to the candidate

2. **Clarify and simplify the language** in the application and review criteria

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The Important Role of Chairs in Leading Change

As chair, you play a critical role in guiding reviewers to implement these changes to fellowship review.

Shift Roles – Switch from reviewing applications to leading discussions about applications; be clear about the main things you will be trying to accomplish.

Get Key Questions Answered – When the discussion concludes, you and the panel should understand the value of the application in terms of *training* potential.

Set the Tone – Lively, respectful engagement of the entire panel enables good discussions and keeps things interesting.

Listen for Bias and ask questions to pull reviewers back to the review criteria – Bias is most apparent in discussions centering on the sponsor (e.g. career stage) or the institution (well known or not?)

Work in Partnership with the SRO – Review concerns, strategies with your SRO.

Thank you