

How Scientists are Selected and Prepared for NIH Peer Review

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CSR Study Sections



- Each CSR standing study section has 12-24 members who are primarily from academia
- CSR standing study sections convene face-to-face meetings
- As many as 60-100 applications are reviewed by each study section

General Qualifications for Study Section Membership

- The candidate must be a recognized authority in the field
- The candidate usually needs to be a principal investigator on a research project comparable to those being reviewed
- The candidate must be able to provide high quality, fair reviews
- There must be membership diversity with respect to sex, race and ethnicity, and geographic distribution.

Expertise Requirements

- Scientific expertise is the chief consideration
- The entire spectrum of science reviewed must be represented in the membership
- The membership must be responsive to emerging scientific areas and shifting boundaries
- Candidates are sought with a view of the expertise that is rotating off the study section

Scientific Review Administrators have many sources to assist in reviewer selection

- Scientific literature
- Scientific meetings
- Successful grant applicants
- NIH program staff
- Institute Advisory Councils

Terms of appointment

- Appointments are usually for 4 years
- Chairmanship is usually the last two years of a 4 year appointment
- No more than 8 years of service are allowed within a 12 year period

Representation of ethnic minority and female scientists

- NIH gives special emphasis to assuring that women and ethnic minorities are adequately represented on study sections
- Diverse representation is required on each nomination slate

Geographic representation

- There is an attempt to represent all geographic regions of the United States
- There is an attempt to represent states that traditionally have not received a large amount of NIH funding

Institutional representation

- **NIH ensures that individual research institutions are not overly represented on a study section**

Federal employees

- **Intramural NIH scientists and scientists from other Federal agencies may serve as reviewers**
- **In practice the number of Federal scientists used as reviewers never approaches the 25% allowed by law**

Temporary Members

- Routinely invited to provide specific scientific and technical expertise
- Identified in the same manner as normal members
- Have same role/responsibilities as normal members

Reviewer Preparation/Orientation

- **Similar for both normal and temporary members**
- **Accomplished in a variety ways, often with the assistance of the Chairman**