

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



Center for  
Scientific Review



## Jumpstart Your Career: CSR Early Career Reviewer Program

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# Early Career Reviewer Program Goals

- Train and educate qualified scientists to become critical and well-trained reviewers
- Expose investigators to the peer review experience to help make them more competitive as applicants
- Enrich the existing pool of NIH reviewers



# ECR Information

- Started in 2011
- 2731 ECRs have served
- Positive feedback – 95% -98% responded in surveys that they felt it was useful and would recommend the program to a colleague

# Qualifications for the Early Career Reviewer Program

- Demonstrated training and experience in the scientific areas under review as evidenced by:
  - Two or more years in faculty appointment or the equivalent
  - An active independent program of research
  - At least 2 senior authored research publications in peer reviewed journals in the past 2 years

**You cannot have an R01 grant or have served on a CSR study section**

# ECR Application and Vetting System (EAVS)

- Potential ECRs must apply using the ECR Application and Vetting System (EAVS) (<https://internet.csr.nih.gov/ECRV2/ECRMain.aspx>)
- SROs can recruit potential ECRs from the ECR database, grant applicants, at scientific meetings, or at the recommendation of others such as experienced reviewers, Program Officers or other ECRs
- ECRs in EAVS are added to the ECR database

# ECR Service

- Assigned 2-4 applications as 3rd reviewer
- Write full critiques for assigned application
- Participate in one study section meeting

# View the Video

Jumpstart Your Research Career with CSR's Early Career Reviewer Program



<https://youtu.be/dtKwYgiuh7M>

# How Can I Become an Early Career Reviewer?

**Apply! Instructions at [www.csr.nih.gov/ECR](http://www.csr.nih.gov/ECR)**

- **If you are accepted, we will:**
  - Place your name in our ECR database
  - Invite you to serve if your expertise is needed to review particular applications



# Helpful Handouts

## Insider's Guide to Peer Review

**Insider's Guide to Peer Review for Applicants**



**NIH Center for Scientific Review**

To help new and established applicants submit better applications, CSR asked current and recent study section chairs to share their personal insights on producing a highly competitive NIH grant application. They responded with great enthusiasm.

**Don't jump too fast into writing your application:** Since the most critical parts are the summary and specific aims sections, write a one-page summary page with specific aims first and share it with someone who is experienced, has their own funding—or ideally—someone who has served on a study section. If you can't view them, start again and use the time you saved to come up with some fresh ideas.

**Propose something significant:** It is a real turn-off to read an application that is basically a re-hash of a previous project with a new issue. The same goes for "one fun" research. Identify an area of current controversy and importance within your field. Make it something that would interest more people than you and your coworkers. Will it be important to clinicians or other investigators? Are you dealing with key questions or controversies in the field?

**Good ideas don't always sell themselves:** Tell me why it's important up front in the background section, and I'll be ready to roll. Tell me what's known and what isn't known and how, after you complete your studies, you'll move the field forward or answer important questions. A lot of people really get unaware of how absolutely important it is to tell the reviewer from the beginning why it's worth doing. If you're seeking an incremental advance over what's known, it's essential to justify it.

## What Happens to Your Grant Application

**What Happens to Your Grant Application: A Primer for New Applicants**

The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) receives all NIH and some other Public Health Service grant applications. Most investigator-initiated applications for NIH funds are referred to CSR review groups.

Your application is assigned to a review group and an NIH Institute or Center

One or more CSR Federal Officers examine your application and determine the most appropriate Integrated Review Group (IRG) to assign to scientific and technical merit. Your application is then assigned to one of the IRG's study sections. A study section typically includes 21 or more scientists from the community of productive researchers. Your application will be assigned to the IRG Institute or Center (IC) that best suited to fund your application based on scientific merit. Most IRGs are assigned approximately 100 applications.

Review Officers follow established guidelines that define the review objectives of each study section. These guidelines frequently overlap, and more than one study section may have the expertise to review your application. You are required to share with your application that you assigned a particular study section or IC. The CSR website offers summary content for each IRG.

The continued expertise of the scientists in a study section is essential to assure the breadth and diversity of the science covered. CSR may recruit temporary reviewers if science that is not covered is needed.

Checking the status of your application

As soon as your application is received and assigned to a study section, notices are posted to your online NIH Commons account information on the Commons and how to register it, available at <http://commons.nih.gov>. You may update when your study section or IC assignment by contacting the Scientific Review Officer (SRO) (previously called Scientific Review Administrator (SRA)) center in your institution or the CSR contact office (202-435-0715). It usually takes weeks to enter the thousands of applications submitted each month. If a notice is not posted in your Commons account within 2 weeks of the submission date, you should contact the relevant office.

Reviews are identified

Your SRO will analyze the content of your application, check for completeness, and decide which reviewers can best evaluate it. Reviewers receive a copy of your application approximately 6 weeks before their meeting. Each application is assigned to three reviewers, and a small list of four people writes critiques. These assigned reviewers read the discussions at the meeting.

Because of the multi-month period between submission and review, applicants often wish to submit additional materials. Before you do, you should contact your SRO to see if this is possible and what kinds of additions apply.

## NIH Grant Application Useful Web Links

**NIH Grant Application Submission and Review Useful Web Links**



**Center for Scientific Review** == <http://www.csr.nih.gov> == 301-435-1115

- NIH Peer Review Streamlined Video  
<http://www.csr.nih.gov/video/peerreview.asp>
- CSR's Early Career Reviewer Program  
<http://www.csr.nih.gov/ECR>
- The Peer Review Process  
<http://www.csr.nih.gov/Apply/submit/ourstory/ThePeerReviewProcess>
- Reviewer's Guide to Peer Review for Applicants  
<http://www.csr.nih.gov/Apply/submit/ourstory/ReviewerGuide>
- CSR Study Section Information - Descriptions, Rotations, Meeting Dates, etc.  
<http://public.csr.nih.gov/StudySections>
- More Helpful Web Links  
<http://www.csr.nih.gov/links>

**NIH Office of Extramural Research** == <http://www.grants.nih.gov>

- Overview of the NIH Grants Process  
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/overview/overview.htm>
- NIH Guide for Grants and Contracts  
<http://www.nih.gov/grants/grants/index.html>
- Writing Your Application  
[http://grants.nih.gov/grants/writing\\_application.htm](http://grants.nih.gov/grants/writing_application.htm)
- Extramural Training Opportunities  
<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/extramural.htm>

The CSR GrantsInfo service provides information and answers to general questions on funding opportunities and grant application forms, instructions, and policies. [grantsinfo@nih.gov](mailto:grantsinfo@nih.gov) or phone 301-435-0714.

 **National Institutes of Health**  
<http://www.nih.gov> 

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<http://www.csr.nih.gov/publications/>

**QUESTIONS?**