

Report on Research Compliance Volume 20, Number 12. November 23, 2023 RRC E-Alerts: November 2, 2023

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NIH Announces ‘Simplified Framework’ for Peer Review, Effective in 2025

Under a new “simplified framework,” NIH peer reviewers will score funding applications based on “three broader factors” than the current five review criteria, Michael Lauer, NIH deputy director for extramural research, and Noni Byrnes, director of NIH’s Center for Scientific Review, wrote in a blog post on Oct. 19. Importance of the research, rigor and feasibility, and expertise and resources are the three new categories, replacing what the reviewers currently use: significance, innovation, approach, investigator, and environment. The change will be in effect for funding applications received as of Jan. 25, 2025.

The change will “help reviewers focus on crucial questions that determine scientific merit,” Lauer and Byrnes wrote. The changes address concerns about the “complexity of the peer review process,” the “increasing responsibilities of peer reviewers in policy compliance” and “the potential for reputational bias to affect peer review outcomes,” they wrote. “Another concern addressed in the new framework is the reliance on peer reviewers to assess policy compliance. Relying on peer reviewers for these tasks has the potential to distract them from their chief goal of assessing the scientific and technical merit of an application. To reduce reviewer burden, NIH staff will assume administrative responsibilities related to the Additional Review Considerations of Applications from Foreign Organizations, Select Agents, and Resource Sharing Plans.” The agency will hold a webinar on the new peer review process Nov. 3, and is “developing an integrated set of training events and resources to communicate the changes to applicants, reviewers, and NIH staff that will be rolled out over the next year.”

[Link to blog post](#)

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