

FASEB

Quality Life Through Research

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Antonio Scarpa, MD, PhD
Center for Scientific Review
National Institutes of Health
RKL2 - Two Rockledge Center, 3030
6701 Rockledge Drive
Bethesda, MD 20892-7776

Dear Dr. Scarpa:

On behalf of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology (FASEB), I am writing in regard to two recent changes to National Institutes of Health (NIH) peer review policies.

We were very pleased to learn that NIH is now requiring reviewers to include a paragraph in their written critiques to explain the factors that informed their overall impact scores. This change will encourage reviewers to provide more specific information on the strengths and weaknesses of a proposal and enable applicants to make informed decisions as to whether or not to revise their proposals for resubmission or to submit an entirely new application.

We would like to recommend a revision to NIH's new policy on post-submission application materials. FASEB remains supportive of efforts to improve the efficiency of peer review and reduce the administrative burden that the application and review process places on applicants, reviewers, and NIH staff. We realize that materials submitted after the grant deadline require additional processing. Nonetheless, it is not uncommon for applicants to acquire data between submission and review that, if considered by the study section, could have a significant impact on their score. In order for NIH to fund the best possible science, reviewers must have access to this information whether it enhances or diminishes their enthusiasm for a proposal. FASEB, therefore, proposes a modification to the policy on post-submission application materials: we recommend that NIH allow applicants to submit one-to-two pages of highly relevant supplemental information (e.g., new data that are likely to impact the review), but only up until a date specified by the Scientific Review Officer just prior to the time that NIH staff send the application materials to reviewers. This change will enable investigators to include late-breaking information in their applications, relieve reviewers of the additional burden of integrating new information into their assessment of applications they have already reviewed, and allow NIH staff to send or post applicant material only once.

Thank you in advance for considering these comments. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide you with any additional information.

Sincerely,



William T. Talman, MD
FASEB President