

OMB# 0925-0627

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NIH, Project Clearance Branch, 6705 Rockledge Drive, MSC 7974, Bethesda, MD 20892-7974, ATTN: PRA (0925-0627).

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Introduction

This survey of NIH grant applicants is to help examine **NIH's Peer Review Process** (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/continuous_review.htm). This information you provide will be useful in assessing recent changes in Peer Review policies and may be used to further improve the peer review process.

You have been **randomly selected** to participate in this survey from a pool of individuals who have submitted at least one NIH research grant application since May 2014. We are interested in your opinions, regardless of whether or not the application(s) you submitted during this time period was funded. Even if you have limited experience submitting grant applications, **your opinions are very important to us**.

The survey should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. You can stop at any point and continue at another time. There are no right or wrong answers, so please give the answer that best describes your opinion. While we would like you to answer all the questions in this survey, you may skip any questions that you do not wish to answer.

Your participation is entirely voluntary. If you choose to complete the survey, your responses will remain *private under the Privacy Act*. Your responses will **not** be linked to your name and will **not** be made known to NIH staff or peer reviewers. They will not be used to assess the performance of individual NIH Institutes, Centers, or Scientific Review Groups. Aggregate responses will be used along with other data to guide NIH management in the continuous refinement of the peer review process.

Your participation is greatly appreciated.

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Section A: Your Most Recent Experience as an Applicant

Please think of the **most recent application** you submitted to NIH (for either a single-PI or multiple-PI grant) that has been reviewed **and** for which a funding decision (either not funded or funded) was reached.

Please **do not include** applications for administrative supplements, as these undergo administrative review instead of peer review.

- Q1** What was the activity code for this NIH research grant application? An activity code refers to the 3-character code used by NIH to identify a specific category of extramural research activity, applied to various funding mechanisms (e.g., R01, R21, K08, P01).

Enter activity code here:

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Q2 Was this the first NIH research grant application for which you were a Principal Investigator (PI)?

NIH Definition of a Principal Investigator: The individual(s) judged by the applicant organization to have the appropriate level of authority and responsibility to direct the project or program supported by the grant. The applicant organization may designate multiple individuals as PDs/Pis [Program Directors/Principal Investigators] who share the authority and responsibility for leading and directing the project, intellectually and logistically. Each PD/PI is responsible and accountable to the applicant organization, or, as appropriate, to a collaborating organization, for the proper conduct of the project or program including the submission of all required reports. The presence of more than one identified PD/PI on an application or award diminishes neither the responsibility nor the accountability of any individual PD/PI.

- Yes
 - No
-

Q3 Were you identified as a New or Early Stage Investigator on this application?

Note: NIH defines a **New Investigator** as an applicant who has not yet competed successfully for a significant NIH independent research award, such as an R01. An **Early Stage Investigator** is defined as a New Investigator who is within 10 years of completing his/her terminal research degree or is within 10 years of completing medical residency (or the equivalent).

- Yes
 - No
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Please continue to answer the following questions focusing on your **most recent NIH grant application** that has been reviewed **and** for which a funding decision has been reached

Q4 Was this an application to conduct clinical research, defined by NIH as research involving human subjects?

- Yes
 - No
-

Q5 Was this a resubmission (A1) application or a new application (A0)?

- Re-submission (A1)
 - New application (A0)
-

Q6 Was your application assigned a numerical overall impact score?

- Yes If Q6 is Yes, ask Q7. Else skip to Q8
 - No
-

Q7 Have you received a Notice of Award letter indicating that your application has been funded?

- Yes
 - No
-

Section B: Peer Review Process and the NIH Research Grant Application

Focusing on your **most recently reviewed** application for which a funding decision has been reached, please indicate if you agree or disagree with the following statements. If a statement does not apply, please select "Not applicable."

Q8 Based on the written critiques in the Summary Statement, my application was evaluated by reviewers with the appropriate expertise.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Focusing on your most recently reviewed application for which a funding decision has been reached, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about your Summary Statement?

Q9A The Summary Statement demonstrated that the reviewers understood the significance of the proposed research.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Q9B The Summary Statement demonstrated that the reviewers understood the roles and qualifications of each member of the research team.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Q9C The Summary Statement demonstrated that the reviewers understood the innovation in my application.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

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Q9D The Summary Statement demonstrated that the reviewers understood my proposed approach.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

If Q6 = Yes, skip to Q11

Q10 Information within the Summary Statement helped me understand why the scientific review group did not discuss my application.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

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Q11 Information within the Summary Statement helped me decide whether or not to resubmit the application.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Q12 Information within the Summary Statement helped me focus on problem areas in the application that could be corrected.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

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Q13 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the individual criterion scores were helpful for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the application?

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Q14 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the information in my summary statement was helpful for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

**If Q14 = Disagree or Strongly Disagree, ask Q14A
Else skip to Q15**

Q14A In what way could the summary statement be more helpful to you for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

Q15 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the information on the NIH web site was helpful for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

**If Q15 = Disagree or Strongly Disagree, ask Q15A
Else skip to Q16**

Q15A In what way could the NIH web site be more helpful to you for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

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Q16 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the discussion with the program officer assigned to your application was helpful for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable

**If Q16 = Disagree or Strongly Disagree, ask Q16A
Else skip to Q17**

Q16A In what way could the program officer be more helpful to you for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

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Q17 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the discussion with other investigators within your department/scientific community was helpful for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

Q18 To what extent do you agree or disagree that the discussion with members of the key personnel named in your application was helpful for deciding on the next steps to take after your application has been reviewed?

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable
-

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Q19 NIH's Biographical Sketch format was recently modified to include items on "contributions to science." The new Biographical Sketch is available at: http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/424/SF424R-R_biosketchsample_VerC.docx.

Have you had an opportunity to review applications submitted using the new Biographical Sketch format?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

If Q19 does NOT = Yes, skip to Intro following Q22

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Q20 In comparison to the former Biographical Sketch, do you think the new Biographical Sketch format improves, has no effect, or weakens an applicant's chance for a successful review outcome?

Improves

If Q20 = Improves, display Q21

Has no effect

Weakens

If Q20 = Weakens, display Q22

Don't know (I have not used the former format)

Q21 Please describe briefly how the new biosketch improves applications in the NIH review process.

Q22 Please describe briefly how the new biosketch weakens applications in the NIH review process.

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The NIH is introducing several new elements in the research grant application. Their purpose is to clarify the rigor and transparency of the science proposed, and to improve the quality of the information available to reviewers and NIH staff. Each element is listed below and additional details are available by following the hyperlinks.

The first three elements, relevant biological variables, scientific premise, and rigorous experimental design, will be considered in the scoring of Significance and Approach.

The fourth element, authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources, will be an additional review consideration that will not be scored individually and will not be considered in the overall impact score.

Q23 Please select two of the four elements below that you believe is most relevant to your own field of science. You will be offered follow-up questions related to the two elements you rate as most relevant.

- Relevant biological variables, such as sex as they are factored into research designs.
If selected, ask Q24
- Scientific premise: consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of any published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of your application.
If selected, ask Q29
- Rigorous Experimental Design:** how the experimental design and methods proposed will achieve robust and unbiased results.
If selected, ask Q33
- Authentication of **Key Biological and/or Chemical Resources:** methods to ensure the identity and validity of key biological and/or chemical resources used in the proposed studies.
If selected, ask Q37

Q23 Please select two of the four elements below that you believe is most relevant to your own field of science. You will be offered follow-up questions related to the two elements you rate as most relevant.

- Relevant biological variables, such as sex as they are factored into research designs.
- Scientific premise: consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of any published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of your application.
- Rigorous Experimental Design**: how the experimental design and methods proposed will achieve robust and unbiased results.
- Authentication of **Key Biological and/or Chemical Resources**: methods to ensure the identity and validity of key biological and/or chemical resources used in the proposed studies.

The strict application of the scientific method to ensure robust and unbiased experimental design, methodology, analysis, interpretation and reporting of results. This includes full transparency in reporting experimental details so that others may reproduce and extend the findings.

Key biological and/or chemical resources include but are not limited to cell lines, antibodies, and specialty chemicals that may differ from laboratory to laboratory or over time and whose qualities and/or qualifications could influence the research data. Standard laboratory reagents such as buffers and other common biologicals or chemicals not expected to vary are not considered to be key resources. Key biological and/or chemical resources are integral to the proposed research and do not need to be generated with NIH funds.

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Relevant biological variables, such as sex as they are factored into research designs:

Regarding research in your field of science, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Q24 Generally speaking, research studies in my field of science are conducted, analyzed, and reported in a way that helps us understand how biological variables, such as sex, influence the findings.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q25 More attention to biological variables, such as sex, in designing experiments will improve the reproducibility of research findings in my field of science.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q26 Regarding the potential influence of biological variables, such as sex, - in my field of science, uniform standards and best practices are needed to guide research design.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q27 If voluntary training were offered on the topic of designing research studies to address the potential influence of biological variables, such as sex, I would encourage my students and laboratory personnel to participate

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
 - Not applicable – I do not have students or lab
-

Q28 Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about the relevance of biological variables to your field of science.

Scientific premise: consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of any published research or preliminary data crucial to the support of your application.

Regarding research in your field of science, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Q29 Generally speaking, the published research in my field of science includes sufficient detail to ensure that methods and results can be reproduced.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q30 Uniform standards and best practices are needed in my field of science to guide the development of the scientific premise

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q31 If voluntary training were offered on the topic of developing a strong scientific premise to support the design of new research studies, I would encourage my students and laboratory personnel to participate

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable – I do not have students or lab personnel

Q32 Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about the relevance of scientific premise to your field of science.

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Rigorous Experimental Design how the experimental design and methods proposed will achieve robust and unbiased results.

Regarding research in your field of science, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Q33 More attention to rigorous experimental design will improve the reproducibility of research findings in my field of science.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q34 Uniform standards and best practices are needed in my field of science to guide the development of a sound and rigorous experimental design.

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q35 If voluntary training were offered on the topic of conducting research using robust experimental designs, I would encourage my students and laboratory personnel to participate

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable – I do not have students or lab personnel

Q36 Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about the relevance of rigorous experimental design to your field of science.

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Authentication of Key Biological and/or Chemical methods to ensure the identity and validity of key biological and/or chemical resources used in the proposed studies.

Information on authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources will be collected as an “other attachment” and will be peer reviewed as an “additional review consideration” that will not be scored individually and is not to be considered in the determination of the overall impact score.

Regarding research in your field of science, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Q37 Generally speaking, most experiments in my field of science are conducted with key biological and/or chemical resources that have been appropriately authenticated or calibrated

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-

Q38 Uniform standards and best practices are needed in my field of science to address the authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources

- Strongly agree
 - Agree
 - Neither agree nor disagree
 - Disagree
 - Strongly disagree
-



Q39 If voluntary training were offered on the topic of authentication of key biological and/or chemical resources, I would encourage my students and laboratory personnel to participate

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Not applicable – I do not have students or lab personnel

Q40 Please tell us anything else you would like us to know about the relevance of authenticating key biological and/or chemical resources to your field of science.

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In 2014, NIH changed the application submission policy to allow applicants to resubmit a research idea from an unsuccessful A1 resubmission. A second resubmission is now allowed with the new A0 application. (http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-14-074.html#sthash_Eum9uk5y.dpuf).

Q41 In your opinion, has the new application submission policy helped, hindered, or had no effect on the NIH peer review process?

Helped

If Q41 = Helped, ask Q41A

Had no effect

Hindered

If Q41 = Hindered, ask Q41B

Don't know

Q41A Please describe briefly how the new resubmission policy has helped NIH's peer review process.

Q41B Please describe briefly how the new resubmission policy has hindered NIH's peer review process.

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Section C: Global Opinions about the Current NIH Peer Review Process

When answering the questions in this section, please think about the current peer review process at NIH, the one under which your most recent NIH grant application was reviewed.

Q42 Based on your most recently reviewed NIH grant application, how fair is the peer review process at NIH?

- Very fair
 - Somewhat fair
 - Neither fair nor unfair
 - Somewhat unfair
 - Very unfair
-

Q43 Based on your most recently reviewed NIH grant application, how satisfied are you with the peer review process at NIH?

- Very satisfied
 - Somewhat satisfied
 - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
 - Somewhat dissatisfied
 - Very dissatisfied
-

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Section D: Background

Q44 What type of organization do you work for?

Select all that apply

- Institution of higher education (including a university foundation)
- Hospital/medical center (including teaching hospitals)
- Independent research foundation or other non-profit institution
- Private sector/for-profit organization (including small businesses)
- Federal, state, or local government agency
- Other (Specify):

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Q45 What is your job title or position?

- Professor or equivalent rank
 - Associate Professor or equivalent rank
 - Assistant Professor or equivalent rank
 - Other (Specify):
-

Q46 Please indicate the degree(s) you have.

Select all that apply

- Ph.D. or other research doctorate
 - M.D.
 - D.D.S.
 - D.V.M. or V.M.D.
 - Other (Specify):
-

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Q47 What is your age?

- Under 35
 - 35 to 40
 - 41 to 45
 - 46 to 50
 - 51 to 55
 - 56 to 60
 - 61 to 65
 - 66 to 70
 - Over 70
-

Q48 What is your gender?

- Female
 - Male
-

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Q49 What is your ethnicity?

- Hispanic or Latino
 - Not Hispanic or Latino
-

Q50 What is your race?

Select all that apply

- American Indian or Alaska Native
 - Asian
 - Black or African American
 - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - White
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Thank you very much for completing the survey!

If you have any ideas for improving the peer review process at NIH, please enter your suggestions here:

100%