How Do I Get Funded?

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Disclaimer:

- Most of the materials in this presentation are taken from NIH guidance on peer review.
- I may be presenting things in a different way than NIH staff.
- I am responsible for my interpretations of the NIH guidance presented here which may differ from the interpretations of NIH staff.
Allow Time to Develop Your Ideas and Proposal

Do you have an idea for your grant yet?

No, I'm waiting for inspiration.

You can't just turn on creativity like a faucet. You have to be in the right mood.

What mood is that?

Last-minute panic.
"Grant Application? Oh, just put it over there."
Prepare for Variability in Committee and Reviewer Perspectives
Become a Reviewer if the Opportunity Arises

To get a front row seat to the future.

To participate in shaping the future of scientific research.

To keep learning and to stay on top of my field.

To give back to the scientific community.

To meet new colleagues and network with other scientists.

To become more successful.

To become a better mentor to emerging scientists.

Why did you become a peer reviewer?
“The path to our destination is not always a straight one. We go down the wrong road, we get lost, we turn back. Maybe it doesn't matter which road we embark on. Maybe what matters is that we embark.”

Barbara Hall

*Northern Exposure, Rosebud, 1993*
Persistence
 NIH Research Plan Section

**Introduction**
- Most resubmission applicants will summarize their changes in the introduction rather than marking up the text of their applications.
- Limit 1 page (except T and R25)

**Specific Aims**
- Includes statement of overall impact
- Page limit 1 page

**Research Strategy**
- Generally 6 or 12 pages depending on mechanism
- Includes 3 subsections, Significance, Innovation, and Approach
- Preliminary studies for New Applications or Progress Report for Renewal/Revision can be separate subsection within Research Strategy, or it can be included within the other 3 subsections
Review Sections and Criteria

Biographical Sketch Section
- A Personal Statement should be included
- Applicants are encouraged to limit references to 15
- Page limit 4 pages for most apps
- Lack of personal statement in the Biographical Sketch may factor into the score for the Investigator(s) scoring criteria

Application Sections without Page Limits
- Reviewers need not consider any excess text that is inappropriately included in a section of the application that has no page limits (i.e. Protection of Human Subjects)
- Inclusion of excess text in a section that does not have page limits should not factor into the overall Impact/Priority score or criterion scores
Scored Criteria

- Significance
- Innovation
- Investigator(s)
- Approach
- Environment
NIH Scoring Significance, Innovation and Impact

**Significance**

- The evaluation of Significance assumes that the “aims of the project are achieved” and/or will be “successfully completed”

- Significance of a project should be evaluated within the context of a (research) field, so reviewers should define the research field within the critique

**Innovation**

- Considered on its own and in conjunction with Significance

**Overall Impact**

- Overall Impact is not a sixth review criterion, but a synthesis of all the (scored and not scored) review criteria

- In Overall Impact, reviewers should assess the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved
NIH Reviewer Guidance on Critiques and Scores

Strengths and Weaknesses

- Reviewers should provide context for the strengths and weaknesses that influenced the overall impact/priority score

- Bulleted points should convey complete thoughts, identifying Specific Aim(s) being referenced, when applicable

Advice to Applicants section

- May be used for comments such as a recommendation to fundamentally revise before resubmission

- May be used to indicate that the applicant included excess text in one or more application sections that do not have page limits
# NIH “Strengths and Weaknesses” Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Exceptional</td>
<td>Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very strong with only some minor weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td>Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Strong but with at least one moderate weakness</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td>Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Some strengths but with at least one major weakness</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Marginal</td>
<td>A few strengths and a few major weaknesses</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses</td>
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</tbody>
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**Minor Weakness:** An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact

**Moderate Weakness:** A weakness that lessens impact

**Major Weakness:** A weakness that severely limits impact
## NIH “Impact” Scoring

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**Non-numeric score options:** NR = Not Recommended for Further Consideration, DF = Deferred, AB = Abstention, CF = Conflict, NP = Not Present, ND=Not Discussed