



Overview of Multi-Step Review Process ICTR Pilot Award Program Community-Based and Health Services Research RFA

This document describes the **multi-step review process** for applications submitted to the following award programs: (1) Clinical & Community Outcomes Research (CCOR) Pilot Award Program, (2) Collaborative Health Equity Research (CHER) Award, (3) Dissemination & Implementation Research (D&I) Award Program, and (4) Stakeholder and Patient Engaged Research (SPER) Award Program. This process does NOT apply to the Translational Basic & Clinical Research Pilot Awards Program.

Overview of the Multi-Step Review Process

- **Preliminary Administrative Review:** Pilot Award Program Manager reviews documents to ensure application completeness.
- **Individual Scientific/Peer Review:** Up to three experienced researchers conduct a confidential scientific review of the application. Each independent reviewer assigns an overall impact score using the NIH 9-point rating scale (1=exceptional; 9=poor). For NIH guidance on the Overall Impact score see [here](#). Scientific merit is determined by averaging the preliminary impact scores from three independent reviewers. Proposals deemed to have high scientific merit will be reviewed and scored by the ICTR-CAP review committee.
- **ICTR-CAP Review Panel:** The ICTR-CAP review panel is similar to the NIH study section meeting. A lead reviewer is assigned to each proposal based on content/methodology expertise. Lead reviewers are non-conflicted faculty or program leads from within the ICTR-CAP federation of programs. The review panel discusses scientific merit, strengths and weaknesses identified by independent reviewers, and responsiveness to the RFA. After discussion each member of the review panel assigns an overall impact score using the NIH 9-point rating scale. Impact scores from each panel member are averaged for each application. Applications with average scores indicating a high level of scientific merit are forwarded to the External Community Review Committee (ECRC).
- **External Community Review Committee (ECRC):** Applications meeting a high threshold of scientific merit are forwarded for review by our UW ICTR-CAP External Community Review Committee (ECRC). The ECRC includes statewide representatives from agencies and organizations committed to improving health for the people of Wisconsin. The ECRC ensures that a strong community voice is represented in UW ICTR funding decisions and makes final funding recommendations to ICTR leadership. After discussion of strengths/weaknesses, each committee member independently scores each proposal using a 1-9 rating scale. Final scores are averaged and top scoring proposals are recommended to ICTR leadership for funding. Read more about the ECRC here: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3783962/>
- Applicants receive de-identified reviewer comments from each stage of the review process. Applicants do not receive scores.

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Scientific Merit Review Criteria

Each proposal is evaluated by up to three experienced researchers using the NIH 9-point rating scale (1= exceptional; 9-poor) scoring system and using the review criteria outlined below. Each section should have its own consideration, but the overall impact score should reflect the reviewer's assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained and strong influence on the research field(s) involved. An application does not need to be strong in all criterion/sections to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For NIH guidance on the Overall Impact score see [here](#).

Standard NIH Review Criteria

- **Overall Impact.** Does this study address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the application are achieved, will scientific knowledge, clinical practice, community health programs or health policy be affected / advanced? The overall impact score should reflect the reviewer's assessment of the likelihood for the project to exert a sustained and strong influence on the research field(s) involved. Note: An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major scientific impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.
- **Significance:** The PI has made a strong case that the project addresses an important problem or addresses a critical barrier to progress in the field.
- **Investigator:** Are the PI and research team well-suited to this project? If the PI is a junior investigator, does s/he have the appropriate experience, training and mentoring? If the PI is a more established PI, has s/he demonstrated an ongoing record of accomplishments that have advanced the field (i.e., publications, external peer-reviewed funding success)?
- **Innovation.** Is the project original and innovative? For example, does the project challenge existing paradigms or practice? Does it address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field? Is a refinement, improvement, or new application of theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions proposed?
- **Approach:** Do the feasibility, conceptual framework, specific aims, study design, methodology, and data analysis and interpretation, exhibit high scientific quality? Has the PI addressed potential problems and alternative strategies if applicable?
- **Environment:** Will the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success? Will the project benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements?
- **Appropriateness of budget request.** Is the proposed project feasible under the proposed budget? Is the budget adequately justified? To make sure the available funds benefit as many projects as possible, only essential elements of grant requests will be awarded.
- **Note:** In addition to the standard scientific review criteria listed above, each RFA has unique review criteria based on the goals and guidance specified within the RFA. Please see the guidance to reviewers for each of RFAs on the funding opportunities page.

Clinical Trials: Additional Review Criteria

Proposals meeting the NIH definition of a clinical trial will undergo additional review criteria.

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- **Definition of a Clinical Trial** (<https://grants.nih.gov/policy/clinical-trials/definition.htm>): A research study in which one or more human subjects are prospectively assigned to one or more interventions (which may include placebo or other control) to evaluate the effects of those interventions on health-related biomedical or behavioral outcomes.
- **Clinical Trial Additional Review Criteria:** Please refer to the additional NIH review criteria specific to clinical trials (see <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-17-118.html>)

ICTR-CAP Review Committee Criteria

In addition to the scientific merit review criteria described above, the ICTR-CAP review panel considers responsiveness to the goals and guidance provided within the particular RFA. In addition, the ICTR-CAP review panel will consider the following application sections:

- **Special Criteria:** Is there evidence that the applicant has chosen two special criteria and incorporated them in a manner that strengthens the proposal?
- **Potential for External Funding:** Is there strong evidence to suggest this project, if funded, is likely to lead to new peer-reviewed grant submissions?
- **Future Considerations:** Has the researcher adequately addressed the potential for this research (if successful) to inform organizational or public policies in the future?

External Community Review Committee Review Criteria

If a proposal reaches a high level of scientific merit, it is forwarded to the External Community Review Committee (ECRC) for final funding recommendations. This body of reviewers (individuals representing agencies and organizations statewide that are committed to improving health) is chosen based on their roles in the Wisconsin health community to ensure that the community voice is represented in UW ICTR funding priorities. Proposals are evaluated by the ECRC based on the following criteria:

- **Significance and Future Potential:** Does this research area address important problems in clinical practice, community health and/or health policy? Does this research area have long-term potential to contribute to the advancement of health for the residents of Wisconsin?
- **Community:** The research proposal effectively and meaningfully incorporates the input of community partners, invested groups, end-users, and/or other appropriate stakeholders.
- **Priority for funding:** The aims of the proposal should be a research priority for UW-Madison and Marshfield Clinic.

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