Overview of the Peer Review Process

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Importance of Understanding Peer Review: an increasingly competitive environment

- *Decreasing funding levels; considerable uncertainty, sequestration; continuing budget resolution.*

- *Increasing numbers of applications*;

  e.g.: NIH: FY 2001 overall success rate for 28,368 applications: 32.1%; FY 2010 Overall success rate for 45,983 applications: 20.6%; FY 2011 Overall success rate for 49,592 applications: 17.7%; FY 2012 Overall success rate for 51,313 applications: 17.6%.

  (source: NIH RePORT: http://report.nih.gov/award/success/Success_ByIC.cfm)

- *For funders, less is often more* (e.g. streamlined review procedures; focused solicitations).

- However, streamlined peer review processes do allow for strategic proposal development.

Streamlined Review Processes: Limited Submissions

- Limited Submission (LS): Funder limits number of submissions from a particular institution; institution conducts first level of review.

- Increased use of LS process by funders as part of efforts to streamline review procedures.

- At UC Merced RDS maintains matrices/calendars of LS and manages the process. See:

- http://rds.campuscms.ucmerced.edu/funding-opportunities/limited-submission-opportunities

- Please inform RDS if you are interested in a LS opportunity.

Peer review process: A quick overview

- Agencies generally describe (and often evaluate) their processes; e.g.:
  - http://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/; (NSF)
  - http://www.csrees.usda.gov/business/competitive_peer_review.html (USDA NIFA Proposals)
  - http://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer/peer.htm (NIH)
    - -NIH site includes detailed explanation of policies and process; a 'what's new' section; FAQs; Study Section Rosters, and more.

- Usually managed electronically.

- May or may not be a 'face to face' panel.

- Panels maybe supplemented with ad-hoc reviewers if additional expertise is needed.

Know how your proposal will be reviewed before you write it

- Proposals that are reviewed by panels may need to be written to a broader audience than proposals that will be reviewed by mail.

- The online descriptions will generally provide considerable information about the process; you may learn more from talking with the Program Officer.

Why do scientists become reviewers? (Hint: it isn't for the pay)

▸ Gain first hand knowledge of the process; learn common proposal mistakes; learn new proposal writing strategies;

▸ Service to Science;

▸ Keeping Current;

▸ Professional Networking;

▸ Q: At what point in your career do you start reviewing?

Questions for our panelists

- Your review experience, agencies, etc. How did you become a reviewer?

- As you were reviewing proposals, what did you most wish PIs knew?

- What did you find most surprising about the review process?

- What did you learn from being a reviewer that was helpful to your own career as a researcher?

- Do you have any tips for researchers who would like to become reviewers?