



FLORIDA STATE  
UNIVERSITY

# **NIH Study Section: A Live Demonstration**

**Henna Budhwani, Lisa Hightow-Weidman,  
Kate Muessig, and Eugenia Millender**

College of Nursing, Florida State University



# Overview

Today, we will demonstrate the NIH review process.

We will use one of Dr. Muessig's R34s (pilot grant) as a real example.

Before the start of this webinar, Jordan emailed faculty engaged in research the R34 Specific Aims page. Do not share this document; it is Dr. Muessig's intellectual property.

We will begin by describing what occurs prior to the Study Section meeting. Then, the team will shift into their assigned roles. After the discussion, I will briefly explain next steps. Thereafter, we will answer questions. No questions will be answered during the demonstration.



# Demonstration Roles

- Chair, Study Section: Dr. Hightow-Weidman
- Reviewer 1: Dr. Budhwani
- Reviewer 2: Dr. Muessig
- Reviewer 3: Dr. Millender



# You Submitted Your Grant

- It is received by the Center for Scientific Review (CSR)
- Post a technical check, CSR routes the proposal to a Study Section
- The Scientific Review Officer (SRO) assigns your proposal to three Peer Reviewers. Reviewers are not NIH employees. They are selected by the SRO based on their expertise to review the science specified in your proposal.
- While Reviewers can see your name and all team member names, you cannot see their name, nor during this stage do Reviewers know the identities of the other Reviewers. In our example, Kate, Eugenia, and I would not know that we were Reviewers on the same application until we met in the Study Section meeting.
- The names of all Reviewers who participate in a Study Section are posted publicly after the meeting, but you will not be informed who the three specific people were that reviewed your proposal.



# Pre-Study Section, Conflict

- Reviewers check all assigned proposals for conflicts. For example, if a Reviewer works at your home institution or published with you in the past three years, the Reviewer must declare conflict on your proposal. Not only can they not review it, but they are removed from the room during the discussion and are blinded from all scores. We can discuss all the nuances of conflict in another session.



# Pre-Study Section, Review

- After conflicts are removed, Reviewers will read and evaluate assigned proposals. They will determine an overall impact score and individual scores on: Significance, Innovation, Investigators, Approach, and Environment. All scores range from 1 being the best to 9 being the worst.
- Reviewers will key scores in the system with written critiques.
- Once the evaluation period has concluded, all Reviewers (still blinded) will see how their peer Reviewers scored the proposal and will be able to read their peers' critiques. They can then adjust their score to increase concurrency, if the Reviewer feels that they may have missed something, scored too tough, scored too lenient, etc.



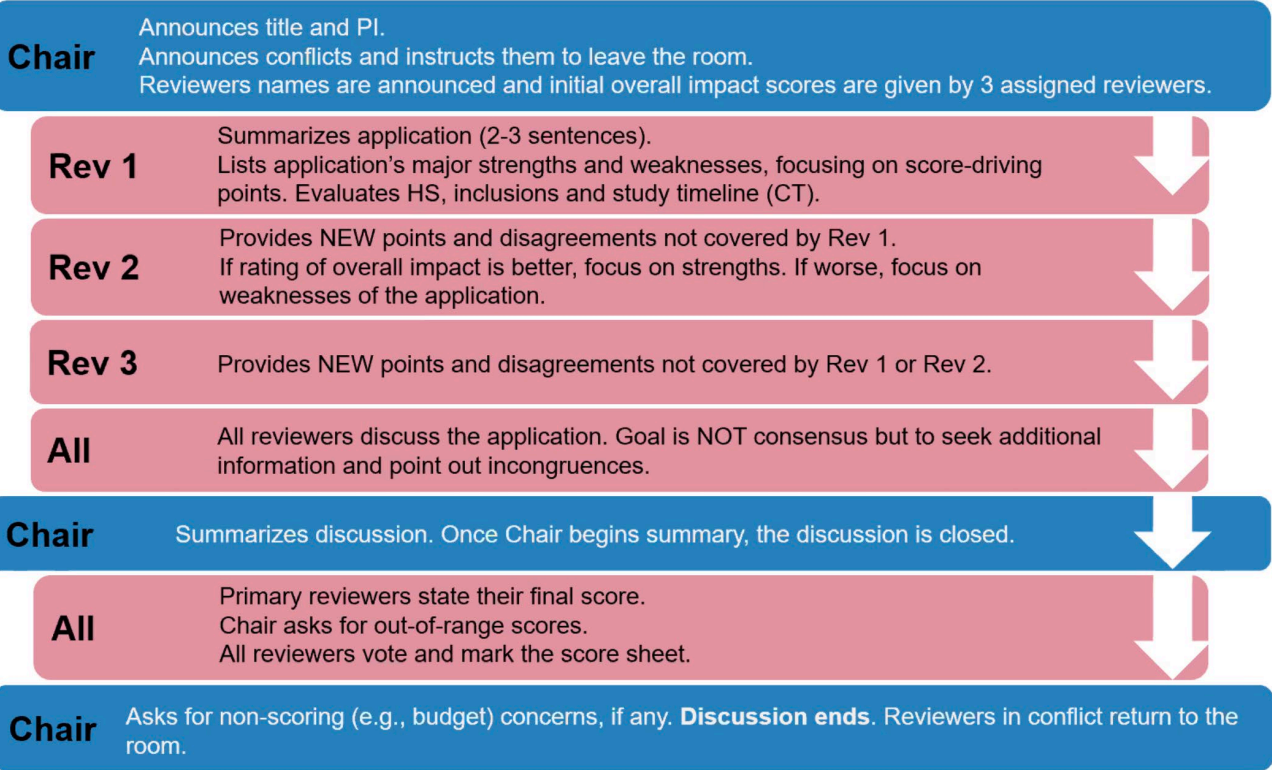
# Study Section

- Once scores have been finalized, Reviewers meet in Study Section.
- The lowest 50% of proposals (based on the average score of the 3 primary reviewers) are triaged and marked as ND=Not Discussed. If a Reviewer finds that a proposal that they reviewed will receive an ND, they can “rescue” it for discussion during the meeting, but this does not happen frequently.
- Once the discussion roster has been finalized, each proposal is given about 15-20 minutes of discussion.



# What Does the Discussion of My Application Consist of?

Approximately 15-20 minutes







**Begin NIH Study Section  
Demonstration.**

**Stop Screen Sharing.**



**End NIH Study Section  
Demonstration.**

**Restart Screen Sharing.**



# Post-Study Section

- Scores are updated, and Reviewers move onto the next proposal. Study Section typically lasts 2 days.
- Shortly thereafter, Impact Scores are released in ERA commons.
- Summary Statements which summarize the discussion are available within a month thereafter.
- Kate, can you please share the outcome of this review? 😊



# Resources and References

- FSU College of Nursing Office of Research and Scholarship (ORS)
  - [ORSgrants@nursing.fsu.edu](mailto:ORSgrants@nursing.fsu.edu)
- Grant Application and Review Process
  - <https://www.nigms.nih.gov/grants-and-funding/grant-application-and-post-award-information/grant-application-and-review-process#:~:text=NIH%20has%20a%20two%2Dstage,both%20scientific%20and%20public%20representatives>.
- Texas A&M International University Office of Research
  - <https://www.tamiu.edu/orsp/writingtips.shtml>
- NIH Peer Review
  - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/peer-review.htm>



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