

SRF, SBE, CCCRF 2011-12

Scoring System and Procedure Guidelines for Reviewers

This scoring system is based on the NIH system. The RAC has modified the language to better reflect the proposals that will be submitted to the internal funding mechanisms. The NIH developed the revised scoring system to encourage more reliable scoring of applications. We encourage reviewers to use the full scale available to them and to carefully consider the rating guidance provided in determining their scores. We believe this system will enhance the competitiveness of proposals that are ultimately submitted for extramural funding.

SCORING

Overview

1. The NIH grant application scoring system uses a 9-point scale
2. A score of 1 indicates an exceptionally strong application with essentially no weaknesses. A score of 9 indicates an application with serious and substantive weaknesses with very few strengths; 5 is considered an average score
3. Ratings are in whole numbers only (no decimal ratings)
4. This scale is used to score five individual criteria (e.g., Significance, Investigator(s), Innovation, Approach, Environment)
5. For the impact/priority score rating, strengths and weaknesses across all of the review criteria should be considered
6. For each criterion rating, the strengths and weaknesses within that review criterion should be considered
7. Reviewers should consider not only the relative number of strengths and weaknesses noted, but also the importance of these strengths and weaknesses to the criteria or to the overall impact when determining a score
8. A major strength may outweigh many minor and correctable weaknesses

Details

- The impact/priority score should reflect the reviewer's overall evaluation, not a numerical average of individual criterion scores
- Reviewers should consider the full range of the rating scale and the scoring descriptors in assigning scores
 - o However, a reviewer should not assume that the applications assigned to him/her necessarily cover that entire range of scores, and should assign scores as appropriate for the work or science proposed
- An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major impact
 - o For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field or the professional development of a faculty member.
- Criterion scores are intended to provide additional information on how each assigned reviewer weighed that particular section so that the PI has a better idea of strengths and weaknesses that need improvement
- Providing scores without providing comments in the review critique is discouraged

- Reviewers should feel free to assign the score that they believe best represents the impact of the application, and not feel constrained to limit their scores to the upper half of the score range if they do not feel such a score is warranted

Reviewer Guidance and Chart

- For the impact/priority score and for the individual criterion scores, the far right column (in the table below) provides a descriptive guide of how strengths and weaknesses are considered in assigning a rating
 - o Minor weakness: easily addressable weakness, does not substantially lessen impact
 - o Moderate weakness: lessens impact
 - o Major weakness: Severely limits impact
- Impact (far left column) is the project's merit
 - o High Impact = 1 to 3
 - o Moderate Impact = 4 to 6
 - o Low Impact = 7 to 9
- Each review criterion should be assessed based on how important each review criterion is to the work being proposed
 - o As a result, a reviewer may give only moderate scores to some of the review criteria but still give a high overall impact/priority score because the one review criterion critically important to the research is rated highly; or a reviewer could give mostly high criterion ratings but rate the overall impact/priority score lower because the one criterion critically important to the research being proposed is not highly rated.

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses
	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses