**Collaborative Pilot Grant Funding (CPG) - Reviewers**

**Procedures, Eligibility, Scoring, and Conflict of Interest**

**Procedure:** The Associate Provost for Research (APR) will typically assign two reviewers to each proposal. Reviewers will be comprised of Reynolda campus faculty and a faculty member from the collaborating institute whenever possible. Faculty will be selected based upon the departments represented by the applicants that year.

Reviewers will provide the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (burtoneg@wfu.edu) with electronic copies of their reviews. The text of these reviews will be passed on verbatim but anonymously to the applicants after the review process is completed.

**Eligibility**:  CPG awards are restricted to collaborative efforts between full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty or research support staff with adjunct faculty appointments, with preference to projects that are not yet competitive for external funding. Preference will also be given to collaborative projects that have not previously received internal funding.

Applications will be evaluated on scientific merit, originality, significance, potential to generate extramural funding, and the benefits of, and need for, the collaboration.

**Scoring:** This scoring system is based on the NIH system. 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.

**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.

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| 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 |

**Conflict of Interest:** A conflict of interest exists when the reviewer and the applicant (or any of the personnel the applicant supervises or collaborates with) have a personal relationship, such as marriage, close relative or friend, current or former collaborator, or former thesis student/advisor.

However difficult in the review of internal proposals, conflicts of interest should be avoided whenever possible. Faculty on university review committees should remove themselves from voting on proposals where personal or departmental conflicts of interest exist.

*Suggestions for Identifying and Handling Conflict of Interest on Internal Awards.*

Prior to distributing applications to the review committee, the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs or designee will contact committee members and tell them the applicants’ names. The reviewers will be asked to indicate whether they believe they have a conflict of interest that prevents them from reviewing any of the proposals.

If a conflict is indicated, the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs will consult with the Associate Provost for Research to determine if a substitute reviewer is needed for that application. If so, the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs will contact the reviewer’s department chair for a replacement.

If there is a discrepancy between the applicant’s and the reviewer’s responses about a conflict of interest, then the Director of Research and Sponsored Programs will resolve the discrepancy with the reviewer and/or the applicant as necessary.