Guideline for Inclusive Grant/Fellowship Review

eLIFE Community Ambassadors

Reviewing research grants and fellowship applications (hereafter called “grants”) is prone to subjectivity; we aim to raise awareness towards objective grant review. Every research idea and CV is unique, and may or may not be close to your personal research experience and knowledge. This makes reviewing and comparing multiple applications in one grant call a difficult job. We recommend using the following guidelines to help reviewers reduce bias, with the goal to perform and write objective grant reviews.

General guidelines to consider when reviewing (multiple) grant applications

- ✔ 1. Consider any potential conflict of interest before accepting the grant review invitation
- ✔ 2. Be aware of your implicit biases when reviewing the applications
- ✔ 3. Have a standard list of questions to review each application
- ✔ 4. Have a standardized rubric to score each application
- ✔ 5. Read the application more than once: first as a broad overview and next to pay attention to details and reflect back
- ✔ 6. When feasible, research small aspects that are unknown to you (such as terms or straightforward experiments)
- ✔ 7. Clearly state which parts of the application you are not qualified to evaluate
- ✔ 8. If possible, perform the initial review blindly; review the research proposal separate from the CV
- ✔ 9. Allocate sufficient time to individually review each grant; review the document(s) completely, per the grant guidelines

Reviewing the grant

- ✔ 1. Does the grant application fit the scope of the funding agency and/or this specific grant call? To ensure, read the grant call posting and reviewer guidelines/form
- ✔ 2. Will the proposed experiments answer the research question/objectives?
- ✔ 3. Does the applicant have the background, skills, resources and/or collaborations to perform this project?

Reviewing the CV

- ✔ 1. Take into account the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA; www.sfdora.org)
- ✔ 2. What has the research of the applicant contributed to the field?
- ✔ 3. Take into account career breaks when reviewing the research output of the scientist (publications, invited seminars/conference talks, etc)
- ✔ 4. Give them credit for travel grants/poster prizes, in addition to (big) fellowships/research grants
- ✔ 5. Take into account contributions to science communication (conferences, public engagement, open science)
- ✔ 6. Take into account service (mentorship, committee member)

Writing the review

- ✔ 1. Give clear and constructive feedback
- ✔ 2. Consider using gender neutral pronouns (e.g. the applicant, Dr [last name], the team)
- ✔ 3. Print review and/or read aloud to assess