

# GUIDELINES FOR REVIEWING 2020 IGP Proposals

## I. General Information

**Program Information:** The full description of the Intramural Grants Program (IGP) can be found at <https://cws.auburn.edu/OVPR/pm/igp/home>

## II. The proposal scoring process:

- Each proposal is assigned three reviewers. Proposals are scored 1-5 (with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest score) based on each of the following criteria:
  - 1. Approach – Is the methodology appropriate to answer the question or perform the study/project being proposed?
  - 2. Significance and Broader Impact – Describe how the project contributes to advancing the field and its relevance to the public.
  - 3. Pathway(s) to extramural funding – Have the applicants described a clear plan, including funding agencies, review panels and potential requests for proposals to achieve extramural funding for work that will follow this proposal and that is based on this proposal?
  - 4. Innovation/Creativity – Is the proposed work innovative and/or creative? Will it have a discernable impact?
  - 5. For Good to Great proposals – Is the proposal responsive to the external reviewer(s) questions/comments? Note that this may mean that the applicant refutes some of the reviewer’s comments with appropriate evidence and citations, but the applicant is also expected to clearly explain how the current proposal will answer the concerns posed by the external review.
- Reviewers also rate the proposal as “acceptable” or “unacceptable” for the following points:
  - 6. Qualifications of the investigative team – Is the team that has been assembled qualified to perform the proposed project?
  - 7. Environment – Do the applicants have access to the necessary facilities and equipment to perform the proposed project?
  - 8. Appropriateness of budget – Is the budget appropriate, too high or too low to do the project?
  - 9. Grantsmanship – Is the proposal put together in a way that makes it easy to understand and review? Note that this category has been added in recognition that the IGP is an opportunity for Auburn University

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investigators to sharpen the skills necessary for success in extramural funding and this feedback is designed to assist with that process.

- (It is noted that the InfoReady system will not accept an acceptable/unacceptable designation but rather requires a number designation. Therefore unacceptable is assigned a rating of “0”; acceptable is assigned a rating of “1”. These numbers are qualitative in nature and are not used in any quantitative mathematical analysis of the reviewer scores.)
- Reviewers provide comments as well as scores for all of the points above.
- As a last question, each reviewer will be asked to assign a rating of Fund or Do Not Fund or Open for Discussion to each proposal.
  - (It is noted that the InfoReady system will not accept a Fund / Do Not Fund designation but rather requires a number assignment. Therefore, Do Not Fund is assigned a rating of “0”; Fund is assigned a rating of “1”. For a proposal rated “Open for Discussion”, the proposal will be sent to the entire reviewer community for comment. The three-reviewer team will give a final funding designation after the comment period of one week has closed. These numbers are qualitative in nature and are not used in any quantitative mathematical analysis of the reviewer scores.)

### **III. Ethical Conduct of Reviewers**

#### **Conflict of Interest Guidelines:**

- The proposed reviewer may not participate in the review panel if:
  - 1) The reviewer is named on any IGP application in a major professional role
  - 2) The reviewer (or close family member) would receive a direct financial or prestigious benefit if the application is funded
- The proposed reviewer may be on the review panel but may not review certain applications and must recuse himself/herself when:
  - 1) Within in the past three years, the reviewer (or close family member) has been a collaborator with or has served as a mentor for any person on the application

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who has a major role. This includes publications, grant submissions, funded grants, any joint scientific work, and co-mentoring of students.

2) The application includes a letter of support or reference letter from the reviewer

- It is not considered a conflict of interest if:
  - 1) The reviewer freely donates reagents or other materials to the proposed project, and these reagents or materials would also be available to other researchers
  - 2) The reviewer is a member of a research network that involves a person with a major role on the proposed project
  - 3) The reviewer and the persons with a major role are from the same college or department if the reviewer certifies that they will act independently of departmental or college affiliation.
  - 4) The reviewer is a committee member of a graduate student who is mentored by a person with a major role on the proposed project.

### **Confidentiality:**

Rules related to the confidentiality of information disclosed to reviewers in the course of review *prohibit* a reviewer from, among other actions:

- Sharing applications, proposals, or meeting materials with anyone who has not been officially designated to participate in the review process, including but not limited to colleagues, lab members, fellows, students, applicants, offerors or employees of an offeror.
- Granting anyone who has not been officially designated to participate in the review process access to any reviewer assembly meeting using his or her password or credentials, or through shared communication including but not limited to a colleague, lab member, fellow, student, applicant, offeror or employee of an offeror.
- Disclosing, in any manner, information about the reviewer assembly deliberations, discussions, or evaluations related to an application or proposal to another member who has declared a real or apparent conflict of interest with that application or proposal.
- Using information contained in an application or proposal for his/her personal benefit or making such information available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organization.
- Disclosing procurement information prior to the award of a contract.

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- Participating in the review process without signing a confidentiality certification,
- The OVPRED may take steps in response to a violation of the above rules, in order to preserve the integrity of the IGP review process. Depending on the specific circumstances, such steps may include but not be limited to:
  - Notifying a reviewer's dean.
  - Terminating a reviewer's service.
  - Pursuing a referral to the Provost for appropriate action.

### **Certification**

I certify that I have read, and understand, the “Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure Rules: Information for Reviewers” above. With the understanding that any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation may subject me to criminal, civil, or administrative penalties, I certify that I fully understand the confidential nature of the IGP review process, including reviewer recruitment, and agree:

1. to destroy, delete, and/or return all materials related to applications or proposals, associated materials made available to reviewers, information and materials related to the recruitment process and reviews, reviewers' evaluations, and discussions during review meetings;
2. not to grant anyone who has not been officially designated to participate in the peer review meeting access to any peer review meeting;
3. not to disclose or discuss the applications or proposals, associated materials made available to reviewers, information and materials related to the recruitment process and reviews, reviewers' evaluations, and discussions during review meetings with any other individual except as authorized by the OVPR or other designated official;
4. not to disclose information about the reviewer assembly deliberations, discussions, or evaluations related to an application or proposal to another member who has declared a real or apparent conflict of interest with that application or proposal;
5. not to use information contained in an application or proposal for my personal benefit or make such information available for the personal benefit of any other individual or organization;
6. not to disclose procurement information prior to the award of a contract; and

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7. to refer all inquiries concerning the recruitment or review, including inquiries related to these Confidentiality and Nondisclosure Rules and/or Certification, to the OVPR or other designated official.

### **IV. Funding Decisions**

Funding decisions will be made by the OVPRED or his/her designee, according to the availability of funds, and based on the rankings and recommendations of the three reviewers.

### **V. Communications with Principal Investigators**

After the funding decisions are made, notifications will be made to the PI. Along with the funding decision, reviewers' comments will also be sent to the PI. Please understand that no matter how high the merits proposals have, we are limited by the availability of funds. Therefore, the fact that a proposal is not funded does not necessarily indicate major problems in the proposal. Under no circumstances should any reviewer discuss the review of a proposal with anyone outside of the IGP.