

Clin-STAR R01/R21 Grant Writing Group (updated 9/27/24)

Chair/Facilitator: Courtney Balentine

Alternate Facilitators: Manish Shah and Jen Brach

Group Expectations:

- Goal is to develop a supportive community that will help current and former Beeson awardees and other clinician scientists interested in aging research to develop successful R-type grant applications (e.g., R01, R21).
- A grant can be submitted to the group at any stage of development (aims page, aims + any other section, full grant, resubmission, etc.) and investigators are encouraged to submit the same grant to multiple sessions so the group can help progress the grant from the initial stages to the final submission.
- Monthly sessions will be 2 hours allowing 30 minutes for each of the 4 grant applications to be presented and reviewed by the other individuals who submit grant applications for that session.
- Each PI having a grant reviewed will also review and provide feedback on each of the other grants that session.
- Each grant will also be reviewed by one Senior Leader (Clin-STAR leader *or* senior Beeson alumni)

Roles

- **Facilitator:** Keep sessions running on time; make sure discussion and feedback are constructive; ensure that PI's main concerns and questions are addressed
- **Primary reviewer** (also a PI presenter): 10-minute description of grant + feedback
- **Secondary and tertiary reviewers** (also a PI presenter): 5 minutes for comments
- **PI:** 10 minutes to ask specific questions and reviewers to provide more informal feedback
- **Senior leader:** in the final 10 minutes, supplement reviewer comments and offer insights from their time on study sections

Grant Review will function similarly to a standard NIH study section for the first 20 minutes (see roles above). If you have not served on an R-level study section, please take the time to review the following video that shows how a study section works ([NIH Peer Review: "Live" Mock Study Section](#)) and read the material on how to provide feedback and score an R-level grant (links at end of this document). Each reviewer will be asked to provide a score for the grant on the 1-9 NIH scale. The primary reviewer will summarize the grant design and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal across the NIH evaluation domains (significance, innovation, approach, study team, environment). Secondary and tertiary reviewers should use their time to indicate agreement or disagreement with the primary reviewer assessment of strengths/weaknesses and raise any additional points that they think would be helpful to the PI. In the interests of time, it is perfectly acceptable for a secondary or tertiary reviewer to simply state that they agree with the prior reviews and have no major points to add.

If the submission is not an entire grant (i.e., aims page only, partially completed grant, etc.) reviewers may not be able to fully assess some elements of the proposal when giving scores. For example, if there is only an aims page, you can't fully evaluate the approach to see if the appropriate controls, tests, or design is being employed. In such a case, it is still helpful to provide a preliminary score based on what you've learned from reading the aims page. This will help the grant writer evaluate how well he/she described the plan and whether reviewer's gestalt of the grant is positive or not. If you feel that you can't evaluate an element of the score, it's perfectly fine to say that and move on with scoring the elements you can assess + providing an overall score that reflects your perception of significance, innovation, approach and other elements.

All reviewers are expected to provide more detailed written comments on their copies of the grant document (in word or pdf format) and send comments and editing suggestions to the PI for each grant at the end of the session. These include specific comments on how to improve the writing or framing of the grant (i.e. "move this sentence from the Background to the aims page to clarify significance" or "here's how I might write this to really catch the reviewer") or any other grantsmanship suggestions that you can provide.

Once the reviewers have finished their formal assessment of each grant, the final 10 minutes should be used for the senior leader and the whole group to provide additional comments and suggestions + the PI can ask additional questions to clarify the best path forward for the grant.

Example Table for assignments

	Facilitator	Senior Leader	Primary Reviewer	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3
Grant/Aims page submitted by:					
Alexis			Bob	Carol	Dave
Bob			Carol	Dave	Alexis
Carol			Dave	Alexis	Bob
Dave			Alexis	Bob	Carol

Monthly Process

- Andrea to email sign-up form to full group for those who would like to have grant materials reviewed and commit to reviewing others' materials (four PIs per session; drafts must be ready to share). Date will be chosen based on the best time that fits most schedules. **Please do not sign up for a session if you can't commit to the entire 2-hour review session so that everyone can get the most out of this opportunity.**
- Notify group of selected time and request confirmation
- Send calendar/zoom invite and provide reviewer assignments (each person's grant will be assigned a primary, secondary, and tertiary reviewer so everyone's grant is reviewed by everyone else). **If the group would like to suggest changes to the reviewer assignments based on expertise or other considerations, please feel free to do this by responding to the group by email.**
- Provide material for review via email or a Dropbox folder; confirm receipt of all materials.

Note:

- All discussions and materials are to be kept confidential.
- Presenter accepts the potential risk of sharing with participants who may then have a COI on future NIH study section.
- Group members can indicate if they don't want their application draft shared with a specific person (e.g., a competitor or potential reviewer).

Helpful Resources

[NIH Peer Review: "Live" Mock Study Section](#)

[Writing effective critiques for NIH research applications](#)

[Additional Scoring Guidance for Research Applications](#)

[Rigor and Transparency: Main Goals](#)

[NIH Simplified Peer Review Framework](#)

[Information for Reviewers NIH](#)

[ART - Assisted Referral Tool \(nih.gov\)](#)

[G.600 - PHS Assignment Request Form \(nih.gov\)](#)

[Statistical Tools \(crab.org\)](#)