

PROPOSAL REVIEW GUIDELINES

- Reviewers have an ethical responsibility to ensure fairness and objectivity. If you do not believe you can review a particular proposal objectively because of a conflict of interest or other issue, you must recuse yourself from that review.
- Scoring should be based solely on the contents of the proposal. This ensures that all reviewers are basing their ratings on the same information. If past history or personal knowledge of the agency or its staff are taken into account at this stage of the review, the objectives of fairness and objectivity can be compromised.
- The purpose of scoring is to identify the best proposals. If you give all proposals the same score, you do not aid the process.
- Attempt to adhere to an **objective standard** as you score the review criteria rather than to compare proposals to one another. Remember you are reviewing only a subset of the applications submitted, so your “best” does not necessarily merit the highest scores, nor does your “worst” necessarily merit the lowest scores.

For example on a rating scale of 1 to 5, a score of 3 or “Satisfactory” could mean you believe this proposal is a worthy investment of taxpayer funds, but not necessarily the best use if funds are limited. A score of 5 or “Excellent” would mean that you believe this proposal merits serious consideration, even if only a small number of awards will be made. A score of 1 or 2 (“Substandard”) means that even if there were sufficient funding available, you do not believe this proposal is a justifiable use of funds.

- Although it is inevitable some raters will be “harder” or “more generous” scorers than others, scorers who tend to the extremes of high or low tend to skew the averages for a proposal.

Some recommendations for the review process:

- Scan an entire proposal before attempting to score. This will give you a better sense of the overall project and how it is presented before you start.
- Then read again, looking specifically for any text that addresses each one of the scoring criteria. You may find that relevant material is not all in one place in the proposal.
- Review the total score to make sure it reflects your sense of the merits of the proposal for consideration for funding.

Scores below 50 represent proposals for which criteria were generally rated as substandard. These have little chance of being funded.

Scores between 50 and 75 represent proposals that are generally deemed **adequate to somewhat above average**. They have a relatively low likelihood of being selected for funding unless they fill a niche unmet by other proposals that the committee wants to address (such as a specific topic area, racial/ethnic population, or geographic area of the city).

Scores between 76 and 90 represent proposals deemed to be **relatively strong** and their selection for funding will be dependent on how many proposals scored in the “Excellent” range and whether they fill a niche unmet by other proposals that the committee wants to address (such as a specific topic area, racial/ethnic population, or geographic area of the city).

Scores above 90 represent proposals that generally scored as **excellent** in all or almost all criteria. They have the highest likelihood of being considered for funding, although even a score in this range is not a guarantee that a proposal will be selected for a grant award. The final determination will likely be based on an attempt to select a final pool of projects that address different funding priority areas and diverse populations and areas of the city.

Past performance/personal knowledge of applicant agency or staff

Objective information on past performance may be relevant in the department's ultimate decision whether to issue a grant award. A history of failure to follow through on projects, pay vendors, or meet deadlines may ultimately lead to a decision not to fund a particular applicant.

It is recommended, however, that you separate these considerations from your rating of this particular proposal. Make a separate set of notes based on your concerns related to past performance or other information you believe to be relevant to the award decision-making process.

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