

## The PREPARE Pilot Program:

### Peer Review by Experts Promotes Achieving Research Excellence

(Revised 2-14-2013)

**Summary:** This Pilot Program will compare the Success Rates of new and competing renewal R01 applications that are peer reviewed prior to their initial submission to NIH (the PREPARE Group) to a control group of comparable applications from PSCOM that did not have prior peer review. The PREPARE group will include the first 20 eligible R01 applications from PSCOM PIs who volunteer to participate and the controls will include the first 20 comparable R01s that were not peer reviewed prior to submission to NIH, beginning with the fall 2012 Receipt Dates. If this study demonstrates that applications in the PREPARE group are funded more frequently by NIH than similar applications that were not peer reviewed before submission, Research Development will consider continuing and potentially expanding this pilot program to other types of grant applications in the future.

**Peer Reviewers:** Peer reviewers who participate in this Pilot Program will be established investigators in the USA who generally have NIH-funded research programs, are leaders in their fields, members of Editorial Boards, etc. but are not current members of the relevant NIH Study Section and are not former advisors, mentors, students, collaborators or co-authors of the PI. Reviewers will be expected to sign a Confidential Disclosure Agreement prior to receiving the draft application and they will receive a \$500 honorarium/payment following submission of their critique.

**Eligibility Criteria for Grant Applications:** Grant applications are eligible for this pilot study if:

- 1) The PI has his or her primary academic appointment in the PSCOM. In addition to the basic science faculty, virtually all physicians employed by The Milton S. Hershey Medical Center have a primary academic appointment in the College of Medicine;
- 2) The application is either a new (Type 1) or competing renewal (Type 2) R01 that is being prepared for submission to NIH for the first time. (NOTE: The application cannot be a “resubmission”, i.e. an application that was already submitted once to NIH that will therefore receive a grant number ending in “A1” when it is resubmitted); and
- 3) The PI volunteers to participate and agrees to provide the information described below to Research Development in a timely way. Investigators may only serve as the PI of one application in either the PREPARE group or the control group.

**To volunteer for the PREPARE Group:** The PI should email the completed PREPARE Enrollment Form to [researchdevelopment@hmc.psu.edu](mailto:researchdevelopment@hmc.psu.edu) approximately 3 months prior the targeted NIH receipt date. The enrollment form is available at <http://www.pennstatehershey.org/web/researchdevelopment/home/forms>.

**You will need the following information to complete that form:**

- 1) A descriptive title and abstract of the proposed application;
- 2) The targeted NIH Application Receipt Date and the expected Study Section assignment;
- 3) **This is the date that you commit to having the draft application ready to distribute to the reviewers.** This date should be a minimum of 6 weeks prior to the targeted NIH application receipt date. The application must include at least the Specific Aims, Research Strategy sections, all Bio-sketches, and a draft budget including proposed effort allocation for the PI and other investigators. This will allow 2 weeks for the reviewers to complete their critiques and 4 weeks for the PI to make any desired changes in the application;
- 4) The names and institutions (in your priority order) of at least 6 proposed reviewers in the **United States** who are leading experts in the field but are not current members of the relevant NIH Study Section and are not former advisors, mentors, students, collaborators or co-authors of the PI; and
- 5) The name of the PI's primary Research Mentor or Division Chief, Vice Chair for Research or Department Chair who may be contacted by Research Development for recommendations of additional reviewers.

**Review Process for the draft application:** Based on recommendations provided by the PI and others, Research Development will invite three expert reviewers to review and prepare confidential written critiques of a draft application. When Research Development receives the draft application from the PI, it will be forwarded to the reviewers who will be expected to review the draft and return their critiques to Research Development within two weeks. The critiques will be forwarded to the PI in confidence without identifying the reviewers, and Research Development will process the honorarium/payment to each reviewer. The PI will be responsible for making any desired revisions in the draft application (or deferring the submission to acquire additional preliminary data) and for submitting it to NIH at the appropriate time through the Office of Research Affairs. Following submission of the application to NIH, Research Development will survey PIs in the PREPARE Group to determine whether they felt that the critiques were helpful to them in strengthening their application. When the PI receives the Summary Statement and any related correspondence from NIH regarding funding of the grant, those materials should be forwarded in confidence to Research Development to enable evaluation of the pilot program.

**Program Evaluation:** When the NIH review process is complete and funding decisions have been made following the initial submission of the application and any subsequent resubmission, Research Development will compare the following parameters for the PREPARE and control groups: Success Rate based on funding decisions, Time elapsed between the initial submission of the application to NIH and the Start Date of funded applications, Overall Impact Score of NIH applications on the initial submission, Percentile Rating of NIH applications on the initial submission, and PI assessment of the program.

If this Pilot Program demonstrates that peer review of draft R01 applications is a cost effective initiative for the institution, we will consider making this voluntary program available on a continuing basis in the future to PIs of R01s and other types of applications, including but not limited to R03s and R21s.

**For More Information:** Contact Research Development ([researchdevelopment@hmc.psu.edu](mailto:researchdevelopment@hmc.psu.edu); 717-531-6949).