

### § 350.53

(2)(i) The extent to which potential panel members have engaged in scientific, technical, or administrative activities appropriate to the category of applications that the panel will consider;

(ii) The roles of potential panel members in those activities; and

(iii) The quality of those activities.

(3) The recognition received by potential panel members as reflected by awards and other honors from scientific and professional agencies and organizations outside the Department.

(4) Whether the panel includes knowledgeable individuals with disabilities, or parents, family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities.

(5) Whether the panel includes individuals from diverse populations.

(Authority: Secs. 18 and 202(e); 29 U.S.C. 717 and 761a(e))

### § 350.53 How does the Secretary evaluate an application?

(a)(1)(i) The Secretary selects one or more of the selection criteria in § 350.54 to evaluate an application;

(ii) The Secretary establishes selection criteria based on statutory provisions that apply to the Program which may include, but are not limited to—

(A) Specific statutory selection criteria;

(B) Allowable activities;

(C) Application content requirements; or

(D) Other pre-award and post-award conditions; or

(iii) The Secretary uses a combination of selection criteria established under paragraph (a)(1)(ii) of this section and selection criteria in § 350.54.

(2) For Field-Initiated Projects, the Secretary does not consider § 350.54(b) (Responsiveness to the Absolute or Competitive Priority) in evaluating an application.

(b)(1) In considering selection criteria in § 350.54, the Secretary selects one or more of the factors listed in the criteria except as provided for in paragraph (b)(2) of this section.

(2) Under § 350.54, the Secretary always considers the factor in paragraph (n)(2) of that section.

(c) The maximum possible score for an application is 100 points.

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(d)(1) In the application package or a notice published in the FEDERAL REGISTER, the Secretary informs applicants of—

(i)(A) The selection criteria chosen; and

(B) The maximum possible score for each of the selection criteria; and

(ii)(A) The factors selected for considering the selection criteria; and

(B) If points are assigned to each factor, the maximum possible score for each factor under each criterion.

(2) If no points are assigned to each factor, the Secretary evaluates each factor equally.

(e) For Field-Initiated Projects, in addition to the selection criteria, the Secretary uses the additional considerations in selecting applications for funding as described in § 350.55.

(Authority: Sec. 202(e); 29 U.S.C. 761a(e))

### § 350.54 What selection criteria does the Secretary use in evaluating an application?

In addition to criteria established under § 350.53(a)(1)(ii), the Secretary may select one or more of the following criteria in evaluating an application:

(a) *Importance of the problem.* (1) The Secretary considers the importance of the problem.

(2) In determining the importance of the problem, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the applicant clearly describes the need and target population.

(ii) The extent to which the proposed activities further the purposes of the Act.

(iii) The extent to which the proposed activities address a significant need of one or more disabled populations.

(iv) The extent to which the proposed activities address a significant need of rehabilitation service providers.

(v) The extent to which the proposed activities address a significant need of those who provide services to individuals with disabilities.

(vi) The extent to which the applicant proposes to provide training in a rehabilitation discipline or area of study in which there is a shortage of qualified researchers, or to a trainee population in which there is a need for more qualified researchers.

(vii) The extent to which the proposed project will have beneficial impact on the target population.

(b) *Responsiveness to an absolute or competitive priority.* (1) The Secretary considers the responsiveness of the application to an absolute or competitive priority published in the FEDERAL REGISTER.

(2) In determining the application's responsiveness to the absolute or competitive priority, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the applicant addresses all requirements of the absolute or competitive priority.

(ii) The extent to which the applicant's proposed activities are likely to achieve the purposes of the absolute or competitive priority.

(c) *Design of research activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of research activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the research activities constitute a coherent, sustained approach to research in the field, including a substantial addition to the state-of-the-art.

(ii) The extent to which the methodology of each proposed research activity is meritorious, including consideration of the extent to which—

(A) The proposed design includes a comprehensive and informed review of the current literature, demonstrating knowledge of the state-of-the-art;

(B) Each research hypothesis is theoretically sound and based on current knowledge;

(C) Each sample population is appropriate and of sufficient size;

(D) The data collection and measurement techniques are appropriate and likely to be effective; and

(E) The data analysis methods are appropriate.

(iii) The extent to which anticipated research results are likely to satisfy the original hypotheses and could be used for planning additional research,

including generation of new hypotheses where applicable.

(d) *Design of development activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of development activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2)(i) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(ii) The extent to which the plan for development, clinical testing, and evaluation of new devices and technology is likely to yield significant products or techniques, including consideration of the extent to which—

(A) The proposed project will use the most effective and appropriate technology available in developing the new device or technique;

(B) The proposed development is based on a sound conceptual model that demonstrates an awareness of the state-of-the-art in technology;

(C) The new device or technique will be developed and tested in an appropriate environment;

(D) The new device or technique is likely to be cost-effective and useful;

(E) The new device or technique has the potential for commercial or private manufacture, marketing, and distribution of the product; and

(F) The proposed development efforts include adequate quality controls and, as appropriate, repeated testing of products.

(e) *Design of demonstration activities.*

(1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of demonstration activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the proposed demonstration activities build on previous research, testing, or practices.

(ii) The extent to which the proposed demonstration activities include the use of proper methodological tools and

theoretically sound procedures to determine the effectiveness of the strategy or approach.

(iii) The extent to which the proposed demonstration activities include innovative and effective strategies or approaches.

(iv) The extent to which the proposed demonstration activities are likely to contribute to current knowledge and practice and be a substantial addition to the state-of-the-art.

(v) The extent to which the proposed demonstration activities can be applied and replicated in other settings.

(f) *Design of training activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of training activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the proposed training materials are likely to be effective, including consideration of their quality, clarity, and variety.

(ii) The extent to which the proposed training methods are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration.

(iii) The extent to which the proposed training content—

(A) Covers all of the relevant aspects of the subject matter; and

(B) If relevant, is based on new knowledge derived from research activities of the proposed project.

(iv) The extent to which the proposed training materials, methods, and content are appropriate to the trainees, including consideration of the skill level of the trainees and the subject matter of the materials.

(v) The extent to which the proposed training materials and methods are accessible to individuals with disabilities.

(vi) The extent to which the applicant's proposed recruitment program is likely to be effective in recruiting highly qualified trainees, including those who are individuals with disabilities.

(vii) The extent to which the applicant is able to carry out the training activities, either directly or through another entity.

(viii) The extent to which the proposed didactic and classroom training programs emphasize scientific methodology and are likely to develop highly qualified researchers.

(ix) The extent to which the quality and extent of the academic mentorship, guidance, and supervision to be provided to each individual trainee are of a high level and are likely to develop highly qualified researchers.

(x) The extent to which the type, extent, and quality of the proposed clinical and laboratory research experience, including the opportunity to participate in advanced-level research, are likely to develop highly qualified researchers.

(xi) The extent to which the opportunities for collegial and collaborative activities, exposure to outstanding scientists in the field, and opportunities to participate in the preparation of scholarly or scientific publications and presentations are extensive and appropriate.

(g) *Design of dissemination activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of dissemination activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the content of the information to be disseminated—

(A) Covers all of the relevant aspects of the subject matter; and

(B) If appropriate, is based on new knowledge derived from research activities of the project.

(ii) The extent to which the materials to be disseminated are likely to be effective and usable, including consideration of their quality, clarity, variety, and format.

(iii) The extent to which the methods for dissemination are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration.

(iv) The extent to which the materials and information to be disseminated and the methods for dissemination are appropriate to the target population, including consideration of the familiarity of the target population

with the subject matter, format of the information, and subject matter.

(v) The extent to which the information to be disseminated will be accessible to individuals with disabilities.

(h) *Design of utilization activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of utilization activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the potential new users of the information or technology have a practical use for the information and are likely to adopt the practices or use the information or technology, including new devices.

(ii) The extent to which the utilization strategies are likely to be effective.

(iii) The extent to which the information or technology is likely to be of use in other settings.

(i) *Design of technical assistance activities.* (1) The Secretary considers the extent to which the design of technical assistance activities is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project.

(2) In determining the extent to which the design is likely to be effective in accomplishing the objectives of the project, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the methods for providing technical assistance are of sufficient quality, intensity, and duration.

(ii) The extent to which the information to be provided through technical assistance covers all of the relevant aspects of the subject matter.

(iii) The extent to which the technical assistance is appropriate to the target population, including consideration of the knowledge level of the target population, needs of the target population, and format for providing information.

(iv) The extent to which the technical assistance is accessible to individuals with disabilities.

(j) *Plan of operation.* (1) The Secretary considers the quality of the plan of operation.

(2) In determining the quality of the plan of operation, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The adequacy of the plan of operation to achieve the objectives of the proposed project on time and within budget, including clearly defined responsibilities, and timelines for accomplishing project tasks.

(ii) The adequacy of the plan of operation to provide for using resources, equipment, and personnel to achieve each objective.

(k) *Collaboration.* (1) The Secretary considers the quality of collaboration.

(2) In determining the quality of collaboration, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the applicant's proposed collaboration with one or more agencies, organizations, or institutions is likely to be effective in achieving the relevant proposed activities of the project.

(ii) The extent to which agencies, organizations, or institutions demonstrate a commitment to collaborate with the applicant.

(iii) The extent to which agencies, organizations, or institutions that commit to collaborate with the applicant have the capacity to carry out collaborative activities.

(l) *Adequacy and reasonableness of the budget.* (1) The Secretary considers the adequacy and the reasonableness of the proposed budget.

(2) In determining the adequacy and the reasonableness of the proposed budget, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the costs are reasonable in relation to the proposed project activities.

(ii) The extent to which the budget for the project, including any subcontracts, is adequately justified to support the proposed project activities.

(iii) The extent to which the applicant is of sufficient size, scope, and quality to effectively carry out the activities in an efficient manner.

(m) *Plan of evaluation.* (1) The Secretary considers the quality of the plan of evaluation.

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(2) In determining the quality of the plan of evaluation, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the plan of evaluation provides for periodic assessment of progress toward—

(A) Implementing the plan of operation; and

(B) Achieving the project's intended outcomes and expected impacts.

(ii) The extent to which the plan of evaluation will be used to improve the performance of the project through the feedback generated by its periodic assessments.

(iii) The extent to which the plan of evaluation provides for periodic assessment of a project's progress that is based on identified performance measures that—

(A) Are clearly related to the intended outcomes of the project and expected impacts on the target population; and

(B) Are objective, and quantifiable or qualitative, as appropriate.

(n) *Project staff.* (1) The Secretary considers the quality of the project staff.

(2) In determining the quality of the project staff, the Secretary considers the extent to which the applicant encourages applications for employment from persons who are members of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented based on race, color, national origin, gender, age, or disability.

(3) In addition, the Secretary considers one or more of the following:

(i) The extent to which the key personnel and other key staff have appropriate training and experience in disciplines required to conduct all proposed activities.

(ii) The extent to which the commitment of staff time is adequate to accomplish all the proposed activities of the project.

(iii) The extent to which the key personnel are knowledgeable about the methodology and literature of pertinent subject areas.

(iv) The extent to which the project staff includes outstanding scientists in the field.

(v) The extent to which key personnel have up-to-date knowledge from

research or effective practice in the subject area covered in the priority.

(o) *Adequacy and accessibility of resources.* (1) The Secretary considers the adequacy and accessibility of the applicant's resources to implement the proposed project.

(2) In determining the adequacy and accessibility of resources, the Secretary considers one or more of the following factors:

(i) The extent to which the applicant is committed to provide adequate facilities, equipment, other resources, including administrative support, and laboratories, if appropriate.

(ii) The quality of an applicant's past performance in carrying out a grant.

(iii) The extent to which the applicant has appropriate access to clinical populations and organizations representing individuals with disabilities to support advanced clinical rehabilitation research.

(iv) The extent to which the facilities, equipment, and other resources are appropriately accessible to individuals with disabilities who may use the facilities, equipment, and other resources of the project.

(Approved by the Office of Management and Budget under control number 1820-0027)

(Authority: Secs. 202 and 204; 29 U.S.C. 761a and 762)

**§ 350.55 What are the additional considerations for selecting Field-Initiated Project applications for funding?**

(a) The Secretary reserves funds to support some or all of the Field-Initiated Project applications that have been awarded points totaling 80% or more of the maximum possible points under the procedures described in § 350.53.

(b) In making a final selection of applications to support as Field-Initiated Projects, the Secretary considers the extent to which applications that have been awarded a rating of 80% or more of the maximum possible points and meet one or more of the following conditions:

(1) The proposed project represents a unique opportunity to advance rehabilitation knowledge to improve the lives of individuals with disabilities.