



PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

COMMITTEE'S MANDATE

The mandate of the Foundation Peer Review Committee is to review proposals submitted by applicants for the Foundation's competitive grants and to advise the Foundation with respect to continuous quality improvement in the proposal review process. The overarching principles inherent in the allocation of the Foundation funds are excellence, equity of opportunity, and due diligence in the use of the Foundation funds.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The proposal reviewers will:

- Undertake a timely, transparent, fair, objective and thorough process for review of eligible project proposals.
- Complete a conflict of interest statement for each proposal review.
- Participate in a conference call to reach consensus on the award selection.
- Submit feedback on the review process

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Proposal Review Committee will consist of a minimum of 3 team members, who will possess a minimum of a Masters degree. The team may also be comprised of one additional individual who is close to completion of their Masters degree. The other team members will act as mentors to this individual in the review process. All applicants must be CDHA members. Previous experience reviewing research proposals or conference abstracts is considered an asset. Committee members will be selected for their breadth of knowledge about research and their maturity of judgment. Maturity of judgment includes three factors:

- a sense of responsibility in decision making
- the ability to consider different view points

- reasoning and the ability to evaluate the proposals

The CFDHRE Program Director will also be a member of the committee, in order to ensure the integrity and quality of the peer review process.

Prospective reviewers are requested to submit a CV with a list of published research within the last 10 years. Reviewers will be requested to participate in the review process for a three year term, which can be renewed once.

SCOPE AND MAGNITUDE OF THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS¹

Proposal review processes are described by CIHR as follows:
The process of peer review consists of a system of expert review of research/scientific work by peers. It is often defined as the process of reviewing and deciding the merit of research proposals submitted for funding. The peer review process is more than a mechanism for allocating funds and judgment of merit. It is a fundamental component of the norms of higher education. It is also a process by which faculty are evaluated and promoted. It is an essential element in the scientific process by which knowledge is developed and judged to be accurate. It is the mechanism of scientific self-regulation, a method used to ensure appropriateness of research procedures, and to evaluate the scientific merit and plausibility of research results. Proponents of peer review assert that the process of peer review enhances the progress of science and is a key mechanism through which the best science is attained.

REVIEW PROCESS

Step 1: Internal Relevancy Review

The CFDHRE Program Director will review the applications to ensure that their objectives are aligned with those of the funding program.

This review will also ensure the completeness of the proposals. The proposals will be screened against the requirements in the Program Guidelines and the Grant Application Form. If a missing document or item appears to be an administrative error, the CFDHRE may decide to notify the applicant that they have 48 hours to correct the omission. Applicants will not be notified of the review outcome until the entire review process has been completed. Applicants will be notified in writing.

¹ CIHR. First Report on Peer Review Innovations. CIHR, June 2005 Cited March 11, 2008
[<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29401.html>]

Step 2: External Review Process

Prior to the review process, reviewers will disclose any real, potential or perceived conflict of interest with the proposals being reviewed, as specified in the **Conflict of Interest Guidelines** below. No Proposal Review Team Member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review of a proposal.

Each member of the review team will complete a **Proposal Review Form** for each proposal assigned to him/her. The following three levels of ratings are proposed:

4-5	Represent the highest scores and indicate that the proposal meets or exceeds the expected criteria and should be considered for funding.	May be funded
2-3	Represent an acceptable score and indicates that the proposal meets all or most of the expected criteria at some level if appropriate revisions are made to the project.	May be funded if appropriate revisions are made
0-1	Represent the lowest scores and indicate significant weakness or absence in meeting the expected criteria or a fundamental flaw in the proposal. Not recommended for funding.	Not fundable

Rate each item on the Proposal Review Form. Space is available for specific comments if the reviewer wishes to make any. A rating of 0-5 should be given to each item. An overall rating should be assigned to each section (Organizational and Project Proposal). The reviewer should take into account the ratings assigned to each item but the assigned score for the section does not have to be an average of these individual items scores. Reviewers may determine that some items should be weighted more heavily than others for a particular proposal and take that into account in their overall section rating.

Once each section has been reviewed, the reviewer should assign the proposal an overall score. In determining an overall score, the reviewer should be guided by the scores assigned to individual sections. However, the overall score does not need to be an average of the section scores.

Please forward your electronic versions of the review form to the CFDHRE Program Director, Judy Lux at foundation@cdha.ca.

Step 3: Phone Conference

Reviewers will participate in a conference call to reach consensus on the reviews. During the phone conference the committee responsibilities will include:

- Discuss their scores and evaluations of the proposals.
- Reach consensus on the ratings for the proposals.
- Rank the proposals in order of priority
- Recommend a budget sufficient to support the proposed research if the application is approved.

Step 4: Feedback on Committee's Effectiveness and the Review Process

In order to maintain an effective and high quality peer review process Review Committee members are encouraged to provide feedback on the committee's effectiveness and the policies of the review process. This information provides an opportunity for the Program Director to address any concerns of the committee members.

PRINCIPLES OF PEER REVIEW

Confidentiality

Integrity of the peer review process depends on the principles of confidentiality. All information contained in applications, reviewer reports, and committee discussions is *strictly confidential*. Applicants must not contact committee members, regarding the status of their applications or ratings. All requests for information on an application or a reviewer report should be referred to CFDHRE Program Director.

CFDHRE provides applicants with access to their own application files. All written material used in evaluating an application is made available to the applicants when they are notified of CFDHRE's decision. The identity of the reviewers will not be revealed to the applicants under any circumstances. However, a list of peer review committee members will be published on the CFDHRE website following the approval of funding.

All materials related to the review process provided to peer review committee members must be stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. When they are no longer required, all material related to the peer review must be destroyed using a secure method or returned to CFDHRE for destruction.

Conflict of Interest Guidelines

The CFDHRE will strive to ensure that its decisions are fair and objective, and that they are seen as such. No Proposal Reviewer with a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest may participate in the review of a proposal.

Conflict of interest occurs whenever a Proposal Reviewer:

- is the Project Leader or a Co-Investigator on the proposal;
- is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the project;
- is a relative or close personal friend of the Project Leader on the proposal;
- has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the Project Leader on the proposal;
- has collaborated, published or jointly applied for funding with the applicant within the last 3 years.
- has made public statements which could be perceived as impairing your ability to address an issue in an impartial and objective manner.
- feels for any reason, that she/he cannot provide an objective review of the proposal.

Any Proposal Reviewer who has such a conflict in regard to a proposal must declare a conflict of interest.

It is the reviewer's ongoing responsibility to inform the CFDHRE of potential conflict of interest situations in which you may be involved so that the issue can be addressed in a preventive manner. It is important that you do so, not only for the CFDHRE but also to protect your own reputation. Note also that disclosures are treated in confidence. In case of doubt, disclosure is your best protection.

Conflict of Interest Form

I have reviewed my current activities and those of recent years, particularly as they relate to the **CFDHRE Conflict of Interest Guidelines**. I have also considered the activities of my spouse and immediate family members in so far as they could be viewed to affect my impartiality.

I hereby certify that I am not in a position of real, potential or apparent conflict of interest except as disclosed herein _____

Yes there is a conflict of interest and I will not review the proposal _____

Fairness

Success of the peer review process is dependent upon committee members to be fair and reasonable; to exercise rigorous scientific judgment; and to understand, and take into account in a balanced way, the particular context of each application. The reviewer should take care not to make comments that could be misconstrued or may be inappropriate. Conversely, a constructive review, which includes helping the applicant by pointing out deficiencies that could be repaired in a resubmission, will help to convince a disappointed applicant that you provided a fair assessment of the proposal.