

Grants Online Guidance

Creating a Review Event

Currently, all Review Events are conducted outside of Grants Online. In preparation for conducting Review Events using Grants Online, and for documentation of existing Review Events, the capability to fully define the Review Event is provided. If it is not possible to fully describe your review event on this page, you will not be able to conduct Review Events using Grants Online when the feature is implemented. The review questions/criteria that are set up in Grants Online must match what is contained in the corresponding FFO under the "Evaluation Criteria" section. A link is provided on the Review Event setup page to display the contents of that section.

[Chapter 8 \(Review Approval Procedures\)](#) of the DOC Grants Manual discusses the requirements for reviews and selecting reviewers.

There are three types of Review Events:

- **Independent Individual Merit** – From the DOC Grants Manual: *Field Readers/Mail Review*. An objective merit review of applications may be obtained by using field readers to whom applications are sent for review and comment. Field readers may also be used as an adjunct to financial assistance application review committees when, for example, the type of expertise needed or the volume of financial assistance applications to be reviewed requires such auxiliary capacity.
- **Non-Consensus Panel** – From the DOC Grants Manual: *Panels/Ad Hoc Committees*. A panel or ad hoc review committee can be used to obtain consensus advice or independent recommendations on the technical merits of applications. Panels including non-Federal personnel should not use consensus scoring unless they comply with the requirements of the Federal Advisory Committee Act.
- **Consensus Panel** – From the DOC Grants Manual: *Federal Advisory Committees*. These committees are generally only appropriate to review financial assistance applications when required by legislation. They must be established in accordance with the Federal Advisory Committee Act. The OGC can provide advice about the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Program offices should be aware that any of the following may be deemed Federal Advisory Committees within the Act:
 - 1) review groups with fixed membership and regular meetings;
 - 2) formally structured review groups which elect or appoint their officers; or
 - 3) review groups which provide consensus advice, by voting or scoring as a group, rather than by having each member of the group score or vote on each application as an individual reviewer.

To create a new Review Event in Grants Online, navigate to the bottom of the Competition details page and click the “Add New >>” link under the Review Events section:

Review Events

Order	Review Event Name	Actions	
1	Mail Review Sample	Edit	Remove
2	Panel Review Sample	Edit	Remove

[Add New >>](#) [Reorder >>](#)

If there are multiple Review Events for a competition, they should be placed in the order in which they are conducted. Each Review Event will have a corresponding set of Reviewer Instructions. Reviewer Instructions will not be removed if the last Review Event is removed. Reviewer Instructions will not be removed if there is any workflow associated with them.

When adding a new Review Event, select the Review Basis (as described above):

Review Event Information

Review Event Name: *

Review Basis: *

Note: All Review Events must be conducted in Grants Online.

Once the Review Basis is selected, it cannot be changed. Clicking Save will create the Review Event and open the Review Event details page:

Non-Consensus Panel

Review Event Name:*

Panel Manager:*

Review Event Manager:*

Review Done By:* Reviews assigned and completed using Grants Online.
 Reviews assigned and completed outside of Grants Online.

Scored Criteria:* Applications will not be scored
 Quantitative - Percent
 Quantitative - Points
 Qualitative

Summary Score Determination:* N/A Mean Median

Not Scored Criteria:* Yes No

Bonus Points:* Yes No

Anticipated Review Start Date:* Anticipated Review End Date:*

[Add Agency Standard Criteria](#)

The required fields must be filled in and the document saved before options will appear for adding review criteria. In our sample, we will start with Percent Criteria. When the document is saved, a section will appear as shown:

Percent Scoring Criteria

Nothing found to display.

[Add New >>](#)

At this point, clicking the “Add Agency Standard Criteria” will add the Agency Standard Review Criteria. Only NOAA currently has Agency Standard Criteria (one set for Fellowships and another set for all other project types). Once these are added, they should be modified to exactly match the criteria as described in the FFO.

Percent Scoring Criteria

Name	Reviewer Comments	Reviewer Score	Minimum Score	Weight	Action	Action
Technical/ Scientific Merit	Required	Required	0.0	0.0	Edit	Delete
Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals	Required	Required	0.0	0.0	Edit	Delete
Overall Qualification of Applicant	Required	Required	0.0	0.0	Edit	Delete
Project Costs	Required	Required	0.0	0.0	Edit	Delete
Outreach and Education	Required	Required	0.0	0.0	Edit	Delete

[Add New >>](#)

[Reorder >>](#)

After Agency Standard Criteria are added to a Review Event, the option to add them will no longer appear. The page to modify the individual criterion is shown here:

Percent Criterion

Criterion Name:*

Reviewer Comments:* Required Not Required Scribe Only Not Allowed

Reviewer Score:* Required Not Required Scribe Only

Minimum Score:*

Weight (%):* %

Description:*

This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives.

When reviews are available to be conducted in Grants Online, the Criterion Name and Description will appear to the reviewer for their consideration. They should exactly match the evaluation criterion that is listed in the FFO. The Reviewer Comments and Reviewer Score fields are only relevant for reviews conducted in Grants Online. Details on different items are described below.

Changing Scored Criteria

If the Scored Criteria are changed from one type to another, e.g. from Quantitative – Percent to Quantitative – Points, the existing scored criteria will be changed to the new Scored Criteria type. In the case of changing from Percent to Points, the Weight field will no longer be relevant and will no longer be displayed (or editable), but a Maximum Score field will then be required.

In the case of changing the Scored Criteria to Qualitative, a default Qualitative Scoring Method will be created if a Qualitative Scoring Method does not already exist, and the scored criteria will be set for evaluation by this Qualitative Scoring Method.

Summary Score Determination

To get an overall score for an application, the mean or median score from all application reviews is used. The mean is simply the average score, e.g. scores of 100, 90, and 50 have a mean score of $(100+90+50)/3 = 80$. The median score for this same set of scores would be 90 (the middle score). In the case of 4 reviews, the median score would be the average of the 2 middle scores.

Allowing Attachments

If choosing the option to conduct reviews in Grants Online (not currently relevant), an option will appear to “Allow Reviewer Attachments”. If this option is selected, reviewers will be able to attach external files as part of the review. This will allow them to mark up a copy of the original Project Description, Budget, or other documents with their own comments and attach to the review. Additionally, it will allow them to attach independently created documents with their reviewer comments.

Qualitative Scoring Methods

Qualitative scoring is descriptive evaluations instead of numeric scoring. Grants Online provides up to 5 descriptions for qualitative evaluations. The default qualitative method has evaluation labels of: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, and Excellent. Any combination of descriptions can be given to a qualitative scoring method, with a minimum of two, e.g. Not Recommended, Recommended.

To create a Qualitative Scoring Method, either the Scored Criteria must be set to Qualitative, or Not Scored criteria must be included in the Review Event. Choosing the Qualitative Scoring Method when no Qualitative Scoring Method currently exists will create the default method, which can then be modified:

Qualitative Method

Name: *

Scale: *

Worst

Score Label: *

Best

Any number of qualitative methods can be created. No two are allowed to have the same name. Only one qualitative method is allowed to be used for Qualitative Scoring. It will always be the first method listed:

Qualitative Scoring Methods

Name	Values	Value Labels	Action	Action
Qualitative Scoring Method	5	WORST: Poor - Fair - Good - Very Good - Excellent :BEST	Edit	Delete
Toxicity	3	WORST: Highly Toxic - Moderately Toxic - Not Toxic :BEST	Edit	Delete

[Add New >>](#)

[Reorder >>](#)

Qualitative Scoring Criteria

Name	Reviewer Comments	Reviewer Score	Action	Action
Technical/ Scientific Merit	Required	Required	Edit	Delete
Importance/Relevance and Applicability of Proposal to the Program Goals	Required	Required	Edit	Delete
Overall Qualification of Applicant	Required	Required	Edit	Delete
Project Costs	Required	Required	Edit	Delete
Outreach and Education	Required	Required	Edit	Delete

[Add New >>](#)

[Reorder >>](#)

The Qualitative Scoring Method used for scoring can be changed by reordering.

Scored Criteria Types

Applications will not be scored

This option is only relevant for reviews conducted using Grants Online and would be used for Universal RFAs (not competitive). If choosing this method of scoring, either Not Scored Criteria must be selected, and at least one Not Scored criterion created, or attachments must be allowed.

Quantitative – Percent

In Percent scoring, each criterion is evaluated by the reviewer on a scale from the Minimum Score to a maximum score of 100 Percent. To get the total score for the application from a single reviewer, each criterion score is multiplied by the weight and summed. To get a valid score, the weights must sum to 100.

Example:

Criteria 1: Weight 50%.

Criteria 2: Weight 30%

Criteria 3: Weight 20%.

Application Review: Criteria 1 Score: 85, Criteria 2 Score: 90, Criteria 3 Score: 94.

Total Application Score: $(85*0.5) + (90*0.3) + (94*0.2) = 88.3$

Quantitative - Points

In Points scoring, each criterion is evaluated by the reviewer on a scale from the Minimum Score to the Maximum Score. To get the total score for the application from a single reviewer, the scored points are simply added. The sum of the maximum scores can add up to any number.

Example:

Criteria 1: Maximum Score 30.

Criteria 2: Maximum Score 20.

Criteria 3: Maximum Score 10.

Total Possible Score: 60.

Application Review: Criteria 1 Score: 25, Criteria 2 Score: 15, Criteria 3 Score: 8.

Total Application Score: $25 + 15 + 8 = 48$.

Qualitative

When qualitative criteria are presented to reviewers in Grants Online, they will be provided a series of radio buttons with the qualitative labels. All qualitative criteria are equally weighted. Because an overall score for the application must be determined in a competitive environment, numeric values will be assigned to each label by the system, with 1 point for the worst value, incrementing by 1 for each subsequent value. The total score for the application will be the sum of scores for the criteria divided by the number of criteria. A value label will then be applied as the overall score as follows: Score 1 to $< 1.5 =$ Worst Label, 1.5 to $< 2.5 =$ Next to Worst Label ... $(X-1).5$ to $X =$ Best Label where X is the number of qualitative label values.

Example:

Qualitative Method (with 3 values):

Label: Poor	Value: 1	Application Total Score 1 to < 1.5
Label: Good	Value: 2	Application Total Score 1.5 to < 2.5
Label: Excellent	Value: 3	Application Total Score 2.5 to 3

Application Review: Criteria 1 Score: Good, Criteria 2 Score: Good, Criteria 3 Score: Excellent. Total Application Score = (Good + Good + Excellent)/3 = Good

Only one Qualitative Criteria Method can be used for application scoring.

Note: The Grants Online Project Management Office can modify the system to provide for unequal weighting of Qualitative Review Criteria depending on user needs. A request will need to be submitted through the GMAC representative with a two month lead time.

Required Comments and Scores

Required comments and scores are only relevant for reviews conducted in Grants Online (not currently available).

If comments are required, the reviewer will not be able to complete or submit their review without entering something in the comments section for the review criterion. Each criterion is individually selectable for the requirement of comments.

If scores are not required, the scoring of applications becomes much more complicated, although Grants Online will properly perform the calculations. Each criterion is individually selectable for the requirement of scoring. This option might be useful if reviewers have different kinds of expertise, e.g. some reviewers have financial expertise and some reviewers have technical expertise. When not all scores are required on each review, it is important to get enough reviewers to ensure that each category is scored at least 3 times for each application. When an application is only partially scored by a reviewer, it is not possible to create a score for that application by that reviewer. An overall score is determined for the application by averaging (or taking the median of) the scores for each category, then adding up the scores for all of the categories.

Example – Percent Scoring

Criteria 1 (Technical Merit): Weight 50%.

Criteria 2 (Project Costs): Weight 30%

Criteria 3 (Outreach): Weight 20%.

	Reviewer 1	Reviewer 2	Reviewer 3	Reviewer 4	Reviewer 5	Reviewer 6	Average	Criteria Weight	Weighted Average	TOTAL SCORE
App1 - Technical Merit	90	85	92				89	0.5	44.5	
App 1 - Project Costs				99	98	97	98	0.3	29.4	
App 1 - Outreach	96	90	95		88		92	0.2	18.45	
App 1 - TOTAL SCORE										92.35
App2 - Technical Merit	85	83	87				85	0.5	42.5	
App 2 - Project Costs				85	88	82	85	0.3	25.5	
App 2 - Outreach	99	91	92		93		94	0.2	18.75	
App 2 - TOTAL SCORE										86.75

* Grants Online will round all scores to nearest tenth, with all scores that are exactly between tenths (.05) rounded up, e.g. the above score of 92.35 is rounded up to 92.4.

WARNING: If any scored criterion score is set as “Not Required”, Grants Online WILL NOT determine scores by reviewer, even if reviewers score all criteria.

Not Scored Criteria

For both scored Review Events and Review Events where applications will not be scored, not scored criteria can be added. Choosing the option to add Not Scored criteria, then saving the Review Event page will provide the option for adding Not Scored Criteria. Not Scored criteria can be set to use any defined qualitative evaluation method, if desired.

When both Scored and Scored Not criteria exist, the following section will appear on the page:

Note: Scored and Not Scored Criteria can be re-ordered together so that Not Scored Criteria are intermingled with Scored Criteria. This should be done after all criteria are defined.

[Reorder Scored and Not Scored Criteria>>](#)

Adding a new Scored or Not Scored criterion will reset any inter-mingled reordering. This feature, combined with adding Not Scored criteria for which the Reviewer Comments are set to “Not Allowed” provides the capability of adding section headings to the scored criteria.

Bonus Points

Bonus points can be added to applications (if defined in the FFO) for meeting criteria that is completely objective and not open to interpretation by application reviewers. To add Bonus Points, choose the Bonus Points option and save the Review Event page. Review criteria for bonus points should not also be evaluated by application reviewers. Bonus points are added to

the overall review score. Bonus points can be on a “sliding scale” where points are given for meeting measureable goals, or they can be an all-or-nothing addition to the review score.

Sliding scale example:

One bonus point is awarded to the application for each 5% of the non-Federal cost share of the proposed total project costs (up to 10 points). This is an objective criterion that can be calculated by the Review Event Manager. In this case, application reviewers should be instructed not to evaluate matching funds. The Review Event Manager will assign bonus points based on a sliding scale (from 0 to 10 points) based on the calculated non-Federal percentage of total project costs.

Non-sliding scale example:

Five bonus points are awarded applications from applicants who have attended a particular workshop. This is an objective criterion that can be determined by the Review Event Manager from the workshop attendance list. Application reviewers would not be instructed to consider this as part of their evaluation (or would be instructed to not consider it). The Review Event Manager will assign bonus points based on the attendance list after the Review Event is closed. All applications from applicants attending the workshop will receive all 5 points.

Bonus Criterion

Criteria Type: *

Criterion Name: *

Maximum Score: *

Sliding Scale: * Yes No

Description: *

Bonus points can be added to applications at any time after the applications have passed their minimum requirements check and been assigned to the Review Event.

Moving Criteria

Evaluation Criteria can be moved between any of the selected kinds of criteria. Note above that the Criteria type is Bonus Points, but it is in a drop-down list. In this case, it could be moved to the scored criteria (Quantitative – Percent) or the Not Scored criteria. After changing the Criteria

Type, additional values may need to be entered, e.g. weight. If changing a Not Scored criterion that is associated with a Qualitative Scoring Method to a scored criterion (Points, Percent, or Qualitative), the existing Qualitative Scoring Method for the Not Scored criterion will be disassociated in favor of the scoring method set up for the scored criteria.