Scientific Management Review Board

Charge on the NIH Grant Review, Award, and Management Process

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Improving the NIH Grant Review, Award, and Management Process

- Brief Background on Peer Review

- Ongoing Efforts

- New Charge to the SMRB

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- Brief Background on Peer Review
  - Origins, Scope, and Core Values

- Ongoing Efforts

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Grant Review, Award, and Management Process: Fundamental to the NIH Mission

- NIH must optimize grant-making in a way that streamlines the process while maintaining accountability and high performance standards

- Reducing the time and effort needed to comply with grant-related administrative requirements will allow researchers to spend more time on research

Scope of NIH Peer Review

- Each year, NIH:

  – Issues over 1,000 Funding Opportunity Announcements

  – Reviews 70,000 – 80,000 applications

  – Recruits ~ 22,500 reviewers (average = two review meetings per reviewer)

  – Runs ~ 2500 meetings
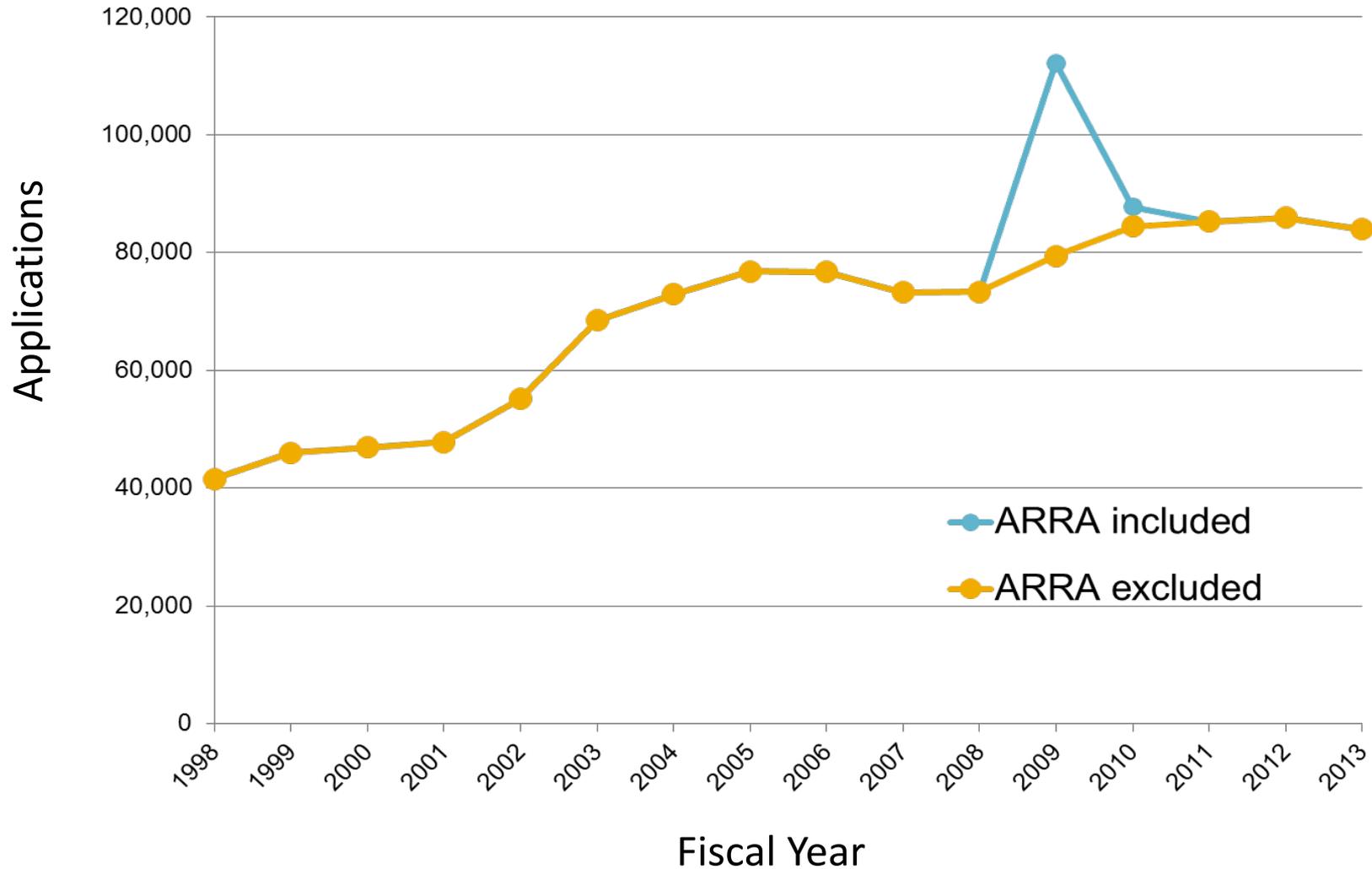
Origins of NIH Peer Review

- The Public Health Service Act (Sec. 492 [289a]) requires the technical and scientific peer review of applications for grants and contracts

  - Requires the reviewing entity be provided with a written description of the research under review

  - The reviewing entity provides the advisory council with this description and the results of the review

Origins of NIH Peer Review (cont.)

- Federal regulation at 42 CFR 52h *Scientific Peer Review of Research Grant Applications and Research and Development Contract Projects*
  - Invokes the Federal Advisory Committee Act
  - Defines the membership of review groups and expertise
  - Defines conflicts of interest for reviewers
  - Outlines review criteria for research projects

Core Values of NIH Peer Review

- Expert assessment
- Transparency
- Impartiality
- Fairness
- Confidentiality

- Integrity
- Efficiency
- Continuous review of Peer Review
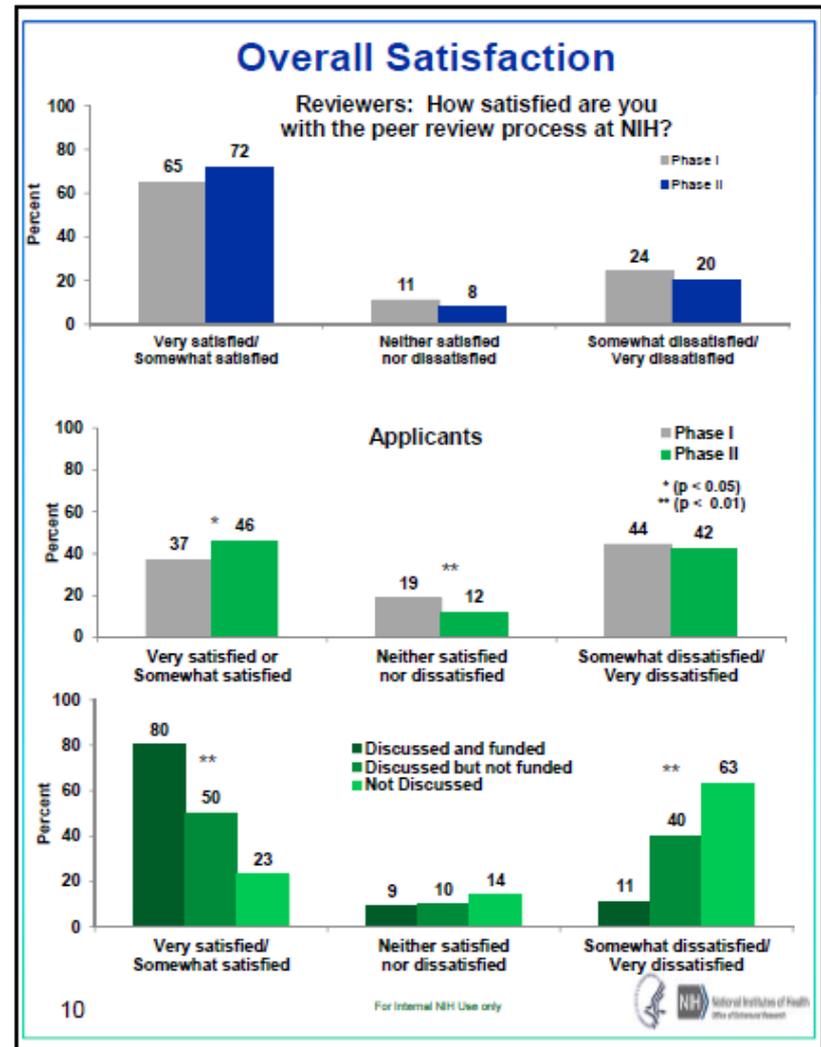
*See NIH Peer Review: Grants and Cooperative Agreements

Continuous Review of Peer Review

Enhancing Peer Review Survey Results Report. National Institutes of Health, Office of Extramural Research. Published May 2013.

Overall Satisfaction survey charts.

Continuous Review of Peer Review (cont.)

ACD Working Group on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce recommended that NIH should:

- Establish a WG of the ACD comprised of experts in behavioral and social sciences and studies of diversity with a special focus on determining and combating real or perceived biases in the NIH peer review system (Recommendation #9)

- Pilot different forms of validated implicit bias/diversity awareness training for NIH scientific review officers and program officers to determine the most efficacious approaches. Once the best training approaches have been identified with NIH staff, pilot these programs with members of study sections to ascertain if their value is sustained. If they are, provide to all study section members (Recommendation #10)

http://acd.od.nih.gov/06142012_DBR_ExecSummary.pdf

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- Brief Background on Peer Review

- ## Ongoing Efforts
  - Develop new approaches for ensuring that NIH peer review is a dynamic process responsive to important and emerging scientific trends and opportunities

- New Charge to the SMRB

Current NIH Efforts to Enhance the Responsiveness of Peer Review to Emerging Scientific Opportunity

- In January 2013, the NIH Director convened a team of NIH experts to:

  - Develop methods for identifying emergent, highly active, areas of science as well as those areas that may have stagnated

  - Recommend approaches for coupling the "state" of scientific fields with study section organization in order to yield a dynamic system responsive to scientific trends

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  - Complementary to, **but distinct from**, ongoing efforts
    - Will need to ensure that all groups are kept abreast of each other's activities
    - SMRB is asked to focus on streamlining and shortening the process while maintaining high quality review

Challenges and Opportunities

- In the current fiscal climate, researchers face declining application success rates and therefore devote more time and effort to preparing and submitting applications

- At the same time, advances in technology may help to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness in the grant-making process

- The range of backgrounds and perspectives represented on SMRB presents NIH with the opportunity to seek high-level advice regarding the grant-making process as a whole

Charge to the SMRB

- NIH requests that the SMRB recommend ways to further optimize the process of reviewing, awarding, and managing grants in a way that maximizes the time researchers can devote to research while still maintaining proper oversight.

- In addressing this charge, the SMRB should consider:

  1. How NIH could streamline the grant-making process and shorten the time from application to allocation of funds

  2. How administrative requirements on applicants and their institutions, scientific reviewers, Council members, and NIH staff could be reduced while maintaining a high-quality review and management process

NIH...

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