

# VIII. PROPOSAL EVALUATION

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## A. REVIEW PROCESS

The review process for applications varies according to the award type. Proposals for Novice Investigator, 1-, 2-, and 3-Year, Pilot Project, Graduate Research, and Research Fellow Awards undergo a two-tiered review process: scientific merit review and programmatic review.

Applications for Fast Track Awards undergo a one-tiered review process independent from the review of applications for other award types. Outcomes from all reviews guide funding decisions made by the TSNRP's Executive Board of Directors. Throughout the review and decision process, confidentiality and conflict-of-interest measures are enforced.

### 1. Review of Novice Investigator, 1-, 2-, 3-Year, Pilot Project, and Research Fellow Awards

The scientific merit review is a *criterion*-based process by which individual proposals are evaluated and scored. The review scores proposals on a scale of 1–5 (in intervals of 0.1); the scoring scale is as follows:

<u>Rating Range</u>	<u>Adjective</u>
1.0–1.5	Outstanding
1.6–2.0	Excellent
2.1–2.5	Very Good
2.6–3.5	Good
3.6–5.0	Fair

#### a. Scientific Merit Review

During scientific merit review, each proposal is evaluated for scientific and technical merit, without regard for the other proposals under consideration.

A Scientific Review Panel (SRP), consisting of a panel chair and civilian and military nurse scientists, is responsible for reviewing, discussing, and scoring the scientific merit of proposals. Panel members are selected from the nursing and healthcare communities based on their research, work experience, and publication history. Two reviewers with expertise in the subject area are selected to evaluate each proposal and provide written evaluations. During the scientific merit review, the reviewers present the proposal, their reviews, and scores to the entire SRP. The panel discusses the proposal; each panel member then scores the proposal individually. The final score is a mean of all panel members' scores.

Military nurse scientists participate in the scientific merit review, but do not score the proposals. Military nurse scientists from one or more services are selected to evaluate proposals for military relevance and feasibility of the research from a military perspective. In reviewing a proposal, the military nurse scientist considers the potential contribution of the proposed research to military nursing, the importance of the research problem to military healthcare, the feasibility of a military research team conducting the proposed research, including the “Time on Station” of military research team members, and the feasibility of accessing and recruiting the proposed sample. The military nurse scientist presents his/her findings to the SRP prior to the scoring of the proposal. During the panel discussion, the military nurse scientists advise the SRP on military-specific concerns.

*1) Criteria Used in Evaluating Novice Investigator, 1-, 2-, and 3-Year, and Pilot Project Awards*

- Original, innovative, and applicable to military healthcare:
  - Reviewers assess originality of the nursing research problem, including whether or not new concepts, approaches, or methods are used.
  - Reviewers assess the innovation in translation or applicability of previous findings to answer military nursing or healthcare problems.
- Hypothesis/research question, rationale, and research strategy:
  - Reviewers assess strengths and weaknesses of the study’s design and determine whether the research will likely reach its stated goal.
  - Reviewers assess appropriateness, feasibility, and adequacy of the approach, research design, and methodology.
- Preliminary data (if applicable).
- Scientific relevance and potential contributions:
  - Reviewers evaluate the potential contribution to nursing and the importance of the research problem addressed. Reviewers also address strengths and weaknesses of these important criteria.
- Reliability and validity of data collection instruments.
- Qualifications of PI and research team:
  - Reviewers evaluate the training and track record of all investigators playing a key role in the proposal. Reviewers note the following for each key individual: name, degree(s), title, field of training or experience, publication record, ability to conduct the research, and whether or not the investigator is a student in an academic program. They also note any missing expertise required for the research.
- Availability of appropriate resources and an environment conducive to successful completion of the project:
  - Reviewers assess the intellectual and physical environment provided by the institution, to include: equipment, space, computers, library, germane facilities, ongoing research, opportunities for interaction with other knowledgeable colleagues, and military environment feasibility. The reviewers list apparent strengths and weaknesses in the environment.
- Soundness of the proposed budget:
  - Reviewers evaluate completeness and accuracy of the budget.
  - Reviewers evaluate the reasonableness of requested personnel costs, equipment, and supplies.
  - Reviewers may recommend budget modifications.
- Publications:
  - Reviewers assess the investigator(s)’ peer-reviewed publication history.

## 2) *Criteria Used in Evaluating Research Fellow Awards*

- Candidate qualifications:
  - Reviewers assess the quality of the candidate’s academic record.
- Mentor qualifications:
  - Reviewers assess the appropriateness of the mentor’s qualifications in the topic of study.
  - Reviewers assess the quality and extent of mentor’s proposed role in providing guidance and advice to the candidate.
  - Reviewers assess the previous experience in fostering the development of researchers.
  - Reviewers assess the history of research, productivity, and support.
- Mentoring Plan:
  - Reviewers assess the likelihood that the career development plan will contribute substantially to the professional development of the candidate.
  - Reviewers assess the appropriateness of the content and duration of the proposed training.
  - Reviewers assess the quality of the proposed training.
- Environment:
  - Reviewers assess the command’s support for release time for the training.
  - Reviewers assess the adequacy of facilities.
  - Reviewers assess the availability of appropriate educational opportunities.
  - Reviewers assess the quality and relevance of the environment for scientific and professional development of the candidate.
- Budget:
  - Reviewers assess the justification of the requested budget in relation to career development goals and research aims.

### **b. Programmatic Review**

The TSNRP Advisory Council, consisting of one Active Duty and one Reserve member from each service, conducts the programmatic review. Programmatic review is both a *criterion-* and *comparison-*based process in which individual proposals are evaluated for relevance to the TSNRP portfolio with regard to the other proposals under consideration. The review scores proposals on a scale of 1–5 (in intervals of 0.1); the scoring scale is as follows:

<b><u>Rating Range</u></b>	<b><u>Adjective</u></b>
1.0–1.5	Outstanding
1.6–2.0	Excellent
2.1–2.5	Very Good
2.6–3.5	Good
3.6–5.0	Fair

Council members review portions of the proposals and the outcomes of the scientific merit review. One member is selected to provide a written evaluation for each proposal; a second member also scores the proposal. During the programmatic review, the primary reviewer presents the proposal, the review, and the score to the entire panel; the secondary reviewer presents the proposal’s score and justification. The entire council discusses the proposal and then agrees on a final score.

1) *Criteria Used in Evaluating Novice Investigator, 1-, 2-, and 3-Year, and Pilot Project Awards*

Reviewers assess:

- Military uniqueness.
  - Operational readiness.
  - Relevance to the TSNRP portfolio; proposals are compared on this criterion.
  - Military relevance.
  - Strengths and stability of the investigative team.
  - Potential benefit of the proposed research relative to the proposed budget.
  - The investigators' military experience and both military and civilian education.
- a) Criteria applicable only to previously funded PI:
- Past performance history: Reviewers evaluate the PI's compliance with the terms and conditions of previous award(s) and compliance with reporting requirements.
  - Dissemination efforts: Reviewers evaluate the PI's efforts at disseminating TSNRP-funded research findings, including papers and poster presentations. *TSNRP expects timely publication of findings in peer-reviewed journals.*

2) *Criteria Used in Evaluating Research Fellow Awards*

- Reviewers assess the candidate's commitment to military nursing research.
- Significance to military nursing research: Reviewers assess the consistency of the career development plan with the candidate's career goals and prior research experience.
  - Retain-ability.
- Environment: Reviewers assess the command's support .

Based on programmatic review, the Advisory Council makes recommendations for funding to the Executive Board of Directors.

**c. Funding Decisions**

Final determinations for funding are made by the Executive Board of Directors comprising the Chief of the Army Nurse Corps and the Directors of the Navy and Air Force Nurse Corps. Funding decisions are based upon the mission and focus areas of the TSNRP, outcomes of the scientific merit and programmatic reviews, and recommendations of the Advisory Council. Applicants for the 1-, 2-, and 3-Year, Pilot Project, Novice Investigator, and Research Fellow Awards should expect to be notified of their proposals' funding status in April 2005.

**As the funding decisions are separate from the scientific review process, decisions may not be appealed.**

## **2. Review of Graduate Research Awards**

### **a. Programmatic Review**

- Scientific merit.
- Feasibility and scope of study.
- Military relevance: timeliness of the topic.
- Applicant's potential to develop as a nurse researcher.
- In determining the graduate student's ability to carry out the proposed research, the reviewers also consider:
  - The student's research education to date.
  - Expected course work.
  - The availability of guidance by the student's sponsor.
  - Support letter from the dissertation or thesis committee chair.

### **b. Funding Decision**

Final determinations for funding are made by the Executive Board of Directors, based upon TSNRP's mission and focus areas and the outcomes and recommendations of the programmatic review by the Advisory Council.

**As the funding decisions are separate from the scientific review process, decisions may not be appealed.**

## **3. Review of Fast Track Awards**

### **a. Programmatic Review**

- Scientific merit.
- Feasibility and scope of study.
- Military relevance: timeliness of the topic.

### **b. Funding Decision**

Final determinations for funding are made by the Executive Board of Directors, based upon TSNRP's mission and focus areas and the outcomes and recommendations of the programmatic review by the Advisory Council.

**As the funding decisions are separate from the scientific review process, decisions may not be appealed.**