

# Submitting a CAREER Proposal

## When is the best time to submit my CAREER proposal?

- When you have a good research idea and a well-developed, well-written proposal with:
  - An important problem, a compelling approach to solving it, and with promising preliminary results.
  - An “actionable” Broader Impact and Integration of Education and Research plan.

## What program do I submit to?

- Read solicitations from candidate programs.
- Do an award search in FastLane using key works.
- **Talk to program directors.**

## What if I choose the wrong program?

- Program Directors will find the best home:
  - The right community/right panel

# What about the CRII program?

## Should I submit to CRII first?

- CRII program is to enable young PIs to recruit graduate students, begin research, and get preliminary results that they for larger proposals to continue the work.

## What if my CRII proposal and CAREER proposals are on the same topic?

- You can't be funded by two project to do the same work.
- However preliminary results from the CRII can be used for a CAREER project—
  - be very clear on what has been/will be done with the CRII and what is proposed in a CAREER grant.

## What if I have an institutional “start-up package”, have a clear idea for a CAREER project and have preliminary results, do I need a CRII grant?

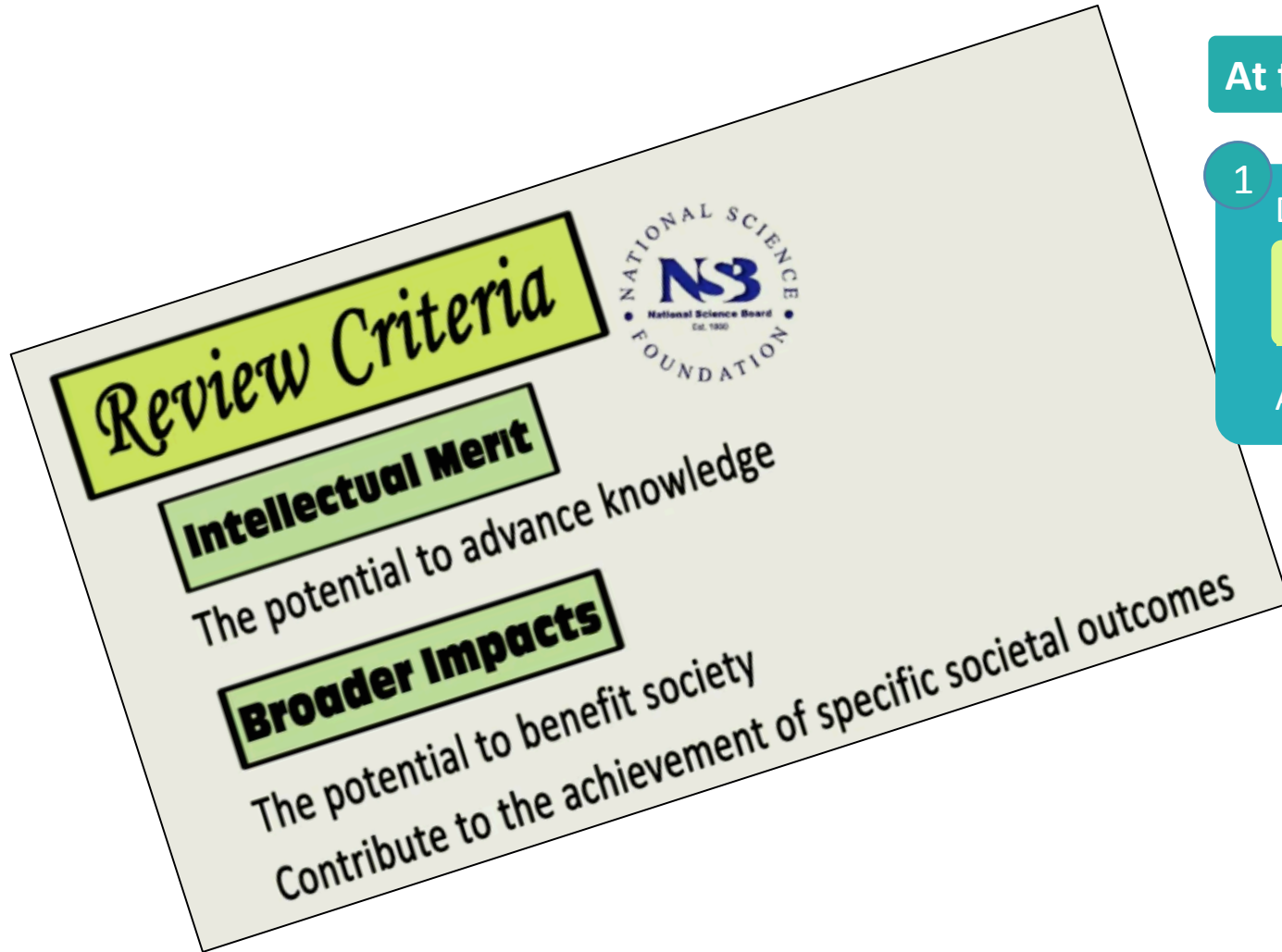
- If you are ready to submit a CAREER proposal, you do not need a CRII award

# How will your proposal be reviewed?

## Before the panel, program directors and staff:

- 1 Ensure your proposal meets the requirements of the solicitation (is compliant) and is in the right program.
- 2 “Bin” your proposal with similar topics or requiring experts with similar expertise.
- 3 Assign 3-5 panelists who are qualified to review it (COIs are noted and no one with a COI is assigned to it or is part of the discussion) and additional ad hoc/mail reviews are requested when needed.

# How will your proposal be reviewed?



At the panel, assigned panelists:

1

Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the:

**Intellectual Merit**

&

**Broader Impacts**

As well as any ad hoc reviews, if applicable.

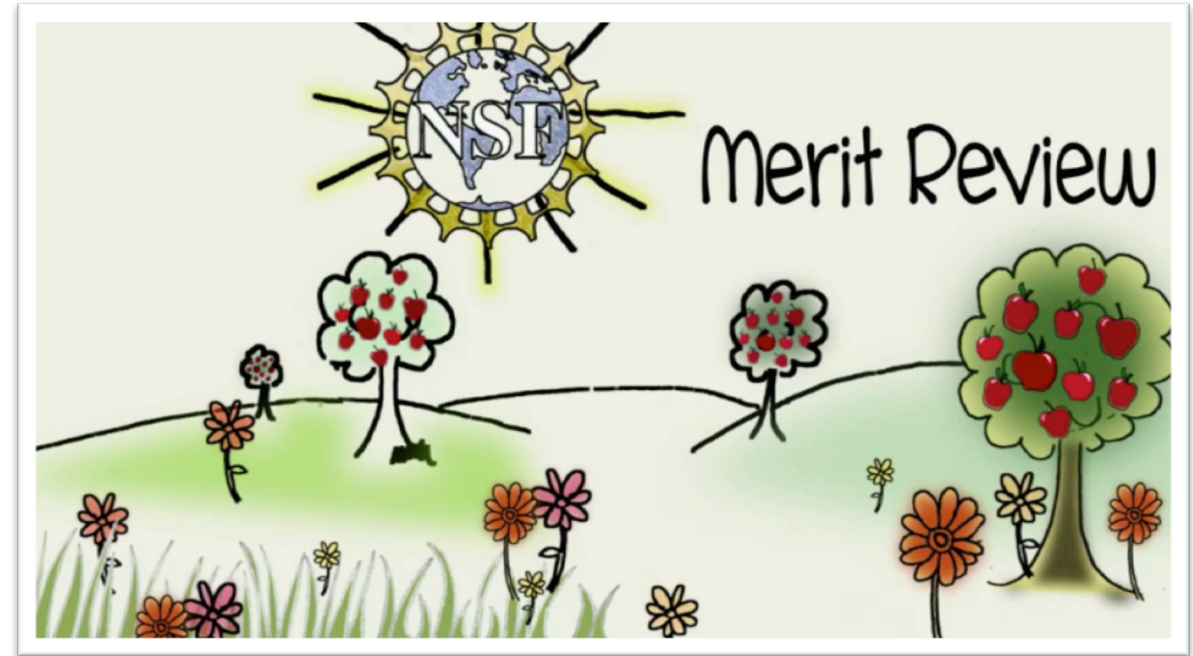
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Place the proposal in a recommendation category (e.g. Highly Competitive, Competitive, Low Competitive, Not Competitive).

# How are funding decisions made?

## Multi-Stage Process:

- CISE has programs and/or clusters—
  - PDs holding the panel make recommendations from each panel
  - The clusters typically discuss competitive proposals across all panels to determine recommendations for funding
  - Intellectual Merit—must be good science
  - Broader Impact—must pass a bar of quality in terms of scope and actionability
  - Integration of research and education
- Clusters brief the division director and deputy division director for approval
- PDs write justification and once the division director concurs, recommendations go to Grants Office
  - Grants can take up to 4 weeks to be officially awarded



# What do you do if you *are* recommended for funding?

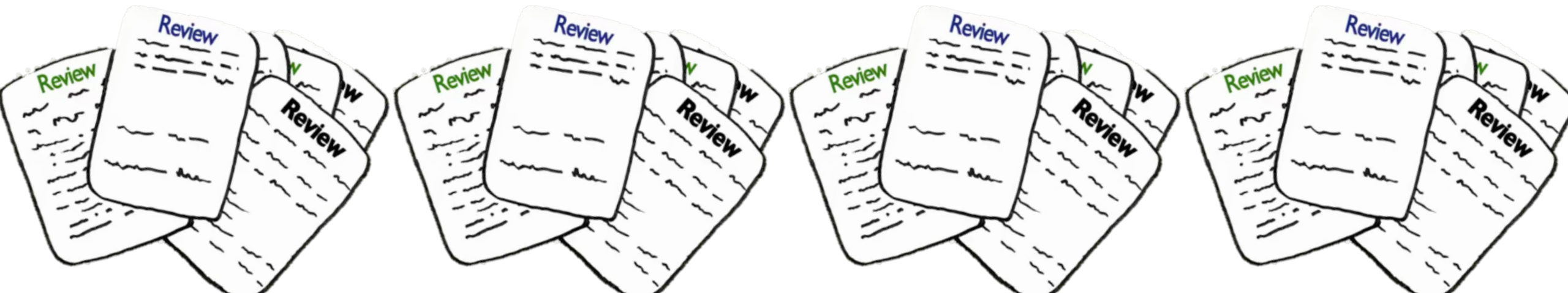
A program director will typically contact you to:

- Negotiate budgets if necessary;
- Require you to address reviewers' concerns;
- Ask for your input in writing a public abstract;
- Follow-up on IRB approvals, if appropriate;
- Require that you set up a CAREER award website to showcase results and Broader Impact activities; and
- Explain the expectations for content for Annual and Final reports.



# What do you do if you *aren't* recommended for funding?

- Don't Panic: Even the best PIs get declinations.
- Carefully read the reviews and panel summary and ask yourself:
  - Did I select an important problem and was I clear about what it is?
  - Did I have and did I explain, with preliminary results, that my approach is credible?
  - Are the concerns critical? Are they “show-stoppers”? Addressable?
- Wait a while, reread your proposal and the reviews and re-ask the above questions.
- Talk to the program director about how to improve your proposal.



# Should you resubmit the same proposal next time?

- Ask yourself:
  - Is this (still) an important problem?
  - Has the topic/approach been overcome by events—someone else has better idea?
- If the topic/approach is still viable:
  - Re-write the proposal—more than what is said by the reviewers may be problematic.
  - Update review of the literature and add work you have done since the last proposal.
  - “Addressing the reviewer concerns” may not apply to a new set of reviewers so remember to make a compelling case for your proposed project.



# What panels look for:

- What are you trying to do? Articulate your objectives using absolutely no jargon. (**Clear summary**)
- How is it done today, and what are the limits of current practice? (**Related work**)
- What's new in your approach and why do you think it will be successful? (**Include preliminary work**)
- Who cares? If you're successful, what difference will it make? (**Impact**)
- What are the risks and the payoffs?
- How much will it cost? How long will it take? (**Budget**)
- What are the midterm and final "exams" to check for success? (**Evaluation plan**)

George H. Heilmeier, President and CEO of Bellcore



For more information on NSF's merit review process, visit  
[nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit\\_review](https://www.nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review)