



U.S. Department of Health & Human Services



Center for  
Scientific Review

# ASPA SRO presentation

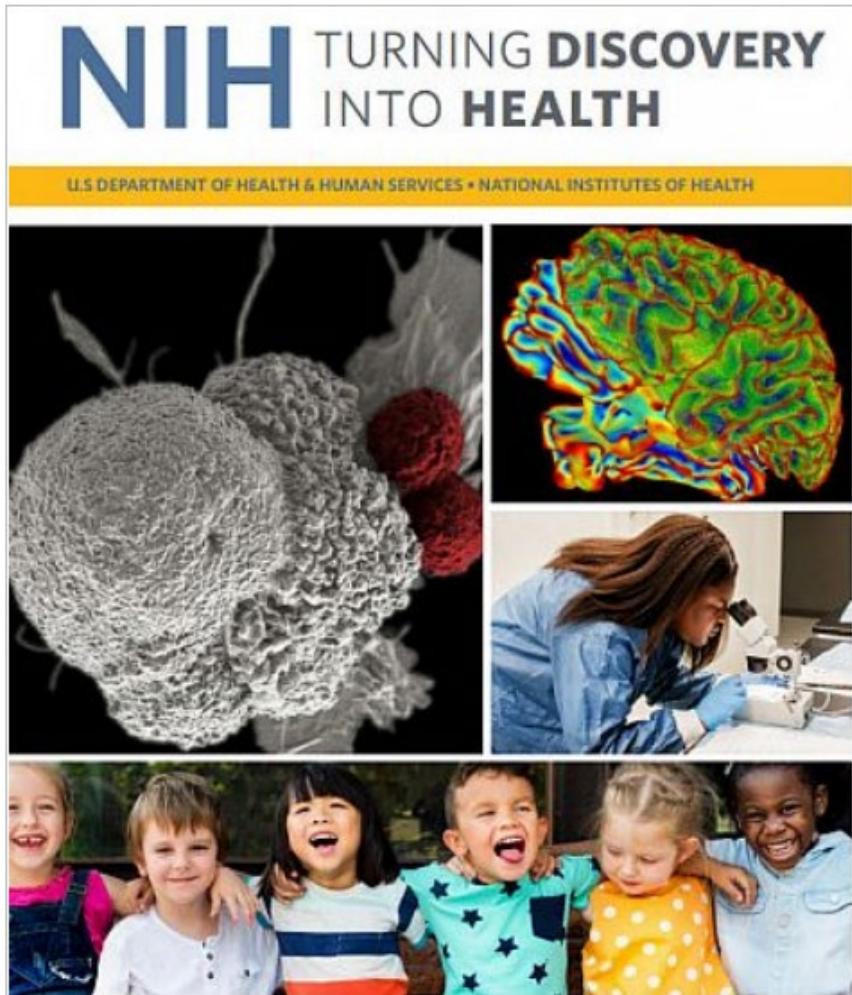
## Joint Statistical Meetings

**August 7, 2022**

**Victoriya Volkova, DVM, PhD (victoriya.volkova@nih.gov)  
Scientific Review Officer**

**Analytics and Statistics for Population Research Panel A (ASPA) study section  
Epidemiology and Population Health branch  
Division of AIDS, Behavioral and Population Sciences  
Center for Scientific Review, National Institutes of Health  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

# NIH - Turning Discovery Into Health



NIH's mission is to seek fundamental knowledge about the nature and behavior of living systems and the application of that knowledge to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability

# CSR's Mission



Center for  
Scientific Review

To ensure that NIH grant applications receive **fair**, independent, expert, and timely scientific reviews - **free from inappropriate influences** - so NIH can fund the most promising research.



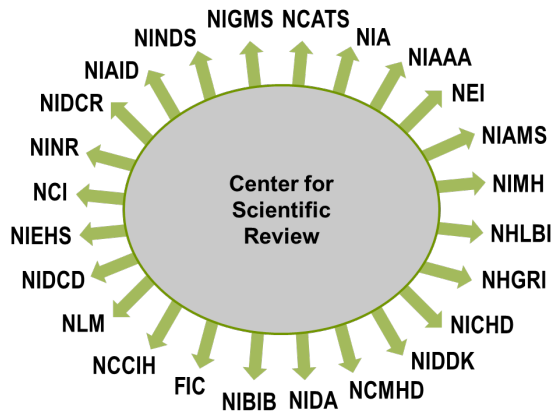
Interested in how CSR is addressing bias in review?

<https://public.csr.nih.gov/AboutCSR/Address-Bias-in-Peer-Review>

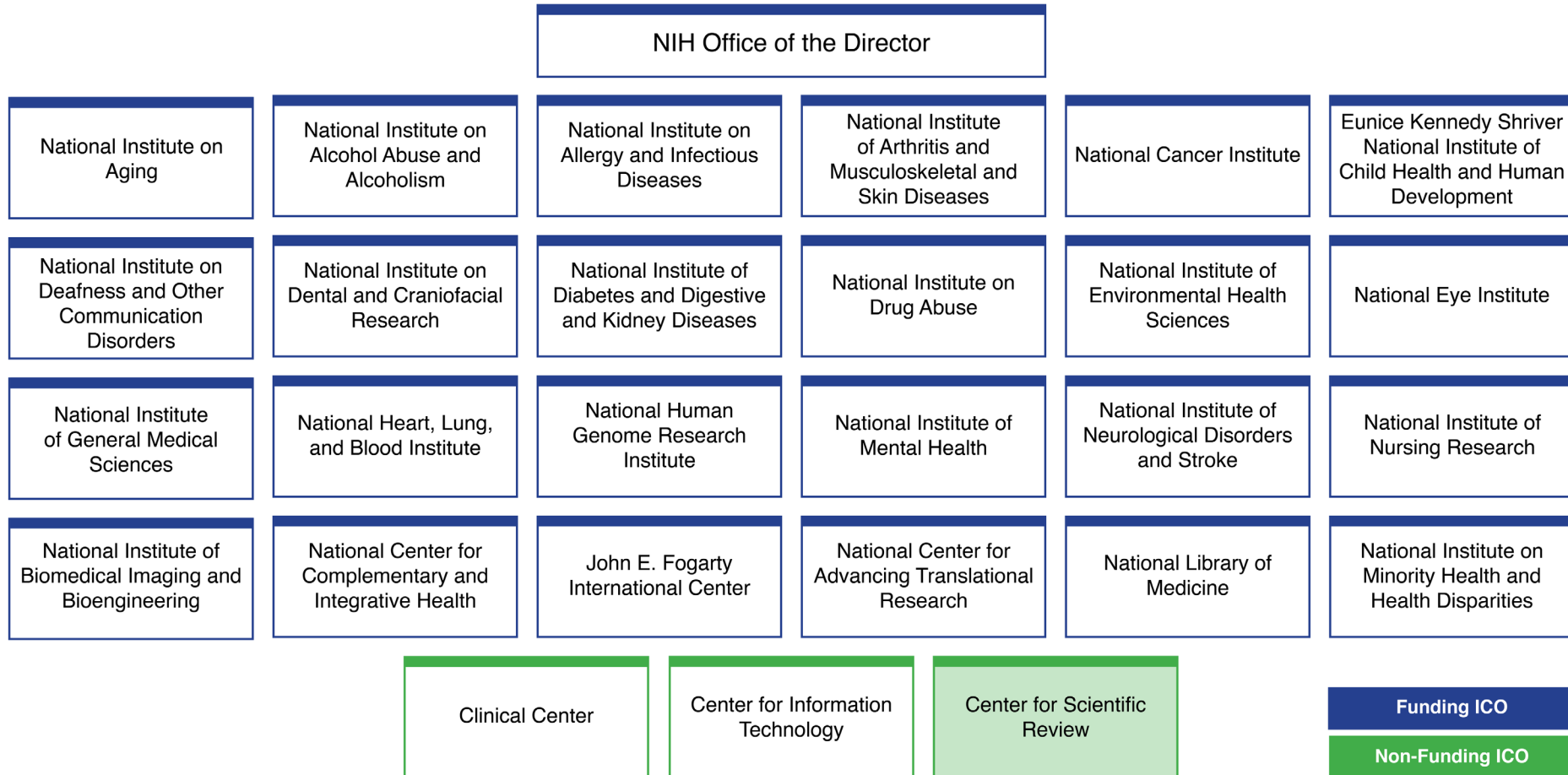
# CSR is the gateway for NIH grant applications



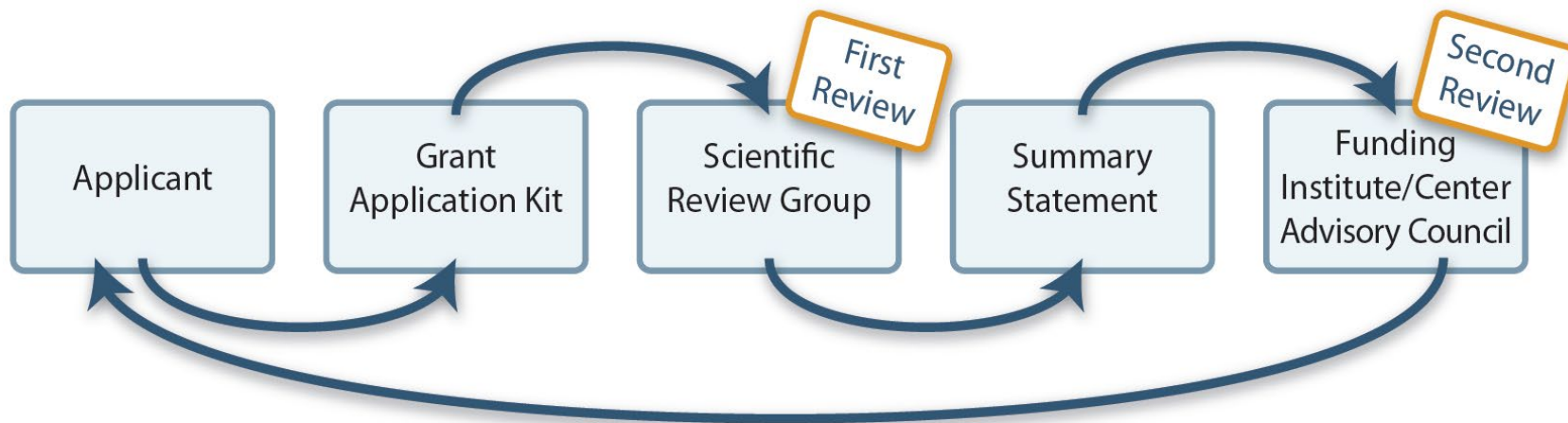
- The Center for Scientific Review (CSR) receives all NIH grant applications
- Assigns applications to CSR or NIH institute scientific review groups for the level I review of scientific merit
- Assigns applications to one or more NIH institutes or centers for the level II funding review
- Administers the level I review of scientific merit of most NIH research applications  
**(76% of all NIH grant applications = ~61,000 applications a year)**



# Your application could be funded by one of 24 NIH institutes or centers (ICs)



# The NIH application review process: 2 levels



An application is assigned based on:

**For the level I review to a scientific review group —**

- Specific, published review guidelines for each review group
- Suggestions made in the Assignment Request Form are considered

**For the level II funding review to an institute or center —**

- Overall mission and guidelines of the IC
- Specific programmatic mandates and interests of the IC
- Applications can only be assigned to ICs participating in the FOA

# Finding study sections to suggest

NIH Center for Scientific Review

What are you searching for?

For Applicants | For Reviewers | News & Policy | Study Sections | Review Panels & Dates | About CSR

Need a study section recommendation? Try CSR's Assisted Referral Tool (ART)

Join CSR's leadership team: we are hiring for a Director, Division of Receipt and Referral

We're hiring SROs!

Find a Study Section

Enter Keyword or Title

- or - Use the Assisted Referral Tool

Assisted Referral Tool (ART)

Keyword search

<http://www.csr.nih.gov>

# Browsing guidelines of study sections

**Study Sections**

Applications are reviewed in study sections (Scientific Review Group, SRG). Review Branches (RBs) are clusters of study sections based on scientific discipline.

Find a Study Section  - OR -

- Review Branches**

Review activities of the Center for Scientific Review (CSR) are organized into Review Branches (RBs). Each RB represents a cluster of study sections around a general scientific area. Applications generally are assigned first to an RB, and then to a specific study section within that RB for evaluation of scientific merit.
- Chartered Study Sections**

Reviews most investigator-initiated research applications (R01, R03, R21, R15, and Ks). Chartered study sections are those with both regular and temporary members.
- Small Business Innovation Research and Technology Transfer Research Study Sections**

Recurring special emphasis panels (SEPs) review Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) and Technology Transfer Research applications (STTR). They include only temporary members, recruited based on expertise needed for each meeting.
- Fellowship Study Sections**

Recurring special emphasis panels (SEPs) review individual fellowship grant applications - F30, F31, F32, F33. Temporary members are recruited based on expertise needed for each meeting.
- All Other CSR Study Sections (Special Emphasis Panel)**

Other one-time or recurring Special Emphasis Panels (SEPs) are held to review applications on special topics and
- HIV/AIDS Research**

HIV/AIDS-related grant applications are reviewed on an expedited cycle.

<https://public.csr.nih.gov/StudySections>



# Finding which study sections reviewed prior applications

The screenshot shows the NIH RePORT Matchmaker tool interface. At the top left is the NIH logo and the text "RePORT Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools". Below this is the heading "Matchmaker" with a green underline. A paragraph explains that users can enter abstracts or scientific text to find similar projects from RePORTER or program officials, with matches based on terms and concepts. A green button labeled "Find a Match" is positioned below the text. At the bottom, there are five navigation options, each with an information icon (i) and a specific icon: "RePORTER" (magnifying glass), "Matchmaker" (network diagram, highlighted with a green underline), "Awards by Location" (globe), "Categorical Spending" (dollar sign with arrow), and "NIH Data Book" (pie chart).

NIH RePORT  
Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools

## Matchmaker

Enter abstracts or other scientific text and Matchmaker will return lists of similar projects from RePORTER or program officials associated with those projects. These matches are based on the terms and concepts used in the submitted text. Matchmaker summarizes the projects by the program official, institute or center, review panel, and activity code.

**Find a Match**

**RePORTER**   **Matchmaker**   **Awards by Location**   **Categorical Spending**   **NIH Data Book**

<https://report.nih.gov/#>

# Assignment Request Form (ARF)

- Suggest assignments (study section and institute or center)
- Identify potential conflicts of interest for reviewers
- List areas of expertise needed to review the application

The screenshot displays the 'PHS Assignment Request Form' with the following sections and fields:

- View Burden Statement** (button)
- PHS Assignment Request Form** (title)
- OMB Number:** 0925-0001  
**Expiration Date:** 2/28/2023
- Funding Opportunity Number:** [Text input field]
- Funding Opportunity Title:** [Text input field]
- Awarding Component Assignment Suggestions (optional)**
  - Text: "If you have a suggestion for an awarding component (e.g., NIH Institute/Center) assignment, use the link below to identify the appropriate short abbreviation (e.g., "NCI" for National Cancer Institute) and enter it below in the boxes for "Suggested Awarding Components". All suggestions will be considered, however, not all assignment suggestions can be honored.
  - Text: "Information about Awarding Component can be found here: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/ohs\\_assignment\\_information.html#AwardingComponents](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/ohs_assignment_information.html#AwardingComponents)"
  - Suggested Awarding Components:** [Three text input fields]
- Study Section Assignment Suggestions (optional)**
  - Text: "If you have a suggestion for a study section assignment, use the link below to identify a study section(s). Enter the short abbreviation for that study section in the boxes for "Suggested Study Sections." Remove all hyphens, parentheses, and spaces. All suggestions will be considered, however, not all assignment suggestions can be honored.
  - Text: "For example, enter "CAMP" if you wish to suggest assignment to the NH Cancer Molecular Pathobiology study section, or "ZRC1HDMR" if you wish to suggest assignment to the NH Healthcare Delivery and Methodologies SBR/STTR panel for informatics."
  - Text: "Information about Study Sections can be found here: [https://grants.nih.gov/grants/ohs\\_assignment\\_information.html#StudySection](https://grants.nih.gov/grants/ohs_assignment_information.html#StudySection)"
  - Suggested Study Sections:** [Three text input fields]
  - Text: "Each entry is limited to 20 characters"
- Rationale for assignment suggestions (optional)**
  - Text: "Entry is limited to 1000 characters"
  - [Large text input area]

# The review cycle of an NIH grant application

## Center for Scientific Review

*Division of Receipt and Referral*

Assigns to Institute(s) and Review Group  
*2 weeks*

## Level I Review:

*Study Section*

SRO Recruits and Assigns Reviewers  
*2-4 weeks*

Reviews for Scientific Merit  
*4-6 weeks*

Meets  
*1-2 days*

Score Release  
*~3 days*

SRO Produces Summary Statement  
*~30 days*

## Level II Review:

*Institute or Center*

Evaluates Relevance to Research Priorities

Council Recommends Action

Funding Decision by IC Director  
*2-4 months*

Managed by a Scientific Review Officer (SRO)

# Check the status of your application in the application folder in your eRA Commons account

### Contacts

**Administration:** Scientific Review Administrator(SRO))  
**Name:**  
**Phone:**  
**Email:**

**Administration:** Program Official (PO)  
**Name:**  
**Phone:**  
**Email:**

### Latest Update

Application Source: Grants.gov  
FOA: [PA16-160] - NIH Research  
Project Grant (Parent R01)

### eRA Commons

Hours: Mon-Fri, 7AM-8PM  
EDIT/EST  
Web: <http://grants.nih.gov/support>  
Toll-free: 866-504-9552  
Phone: 301-402-7469  
Contact initiated outside of business hours via Web or voice mail will be returned the next business day.

### Status Information ?

Filter

1 R01 DK111624-01A1

**Status:** Scientific Review Group review pending. Refer any questions to the Scientific Review Administrator. **Project Title:**

**PI Name:** **NIH Appl. ID:** **Application ID:** 1 R01 DK 00000-01

- + Status
- + Other Relevant Documents
- + Additions for Review
- + Review
- + Institute/Center Assignment
- + Status History
- + Reference Letter(s)

Review

# Check the status of your application in the application folder in your eRA Commons account

The screenshot displays the eRA Commons interface for an application. On the left, the 'Contacts' section lists the Scientific Review Administrator (SRO) and Program Official (PO) with fields for Name, Phone, and Email. Below this is the 'Latest Update' section, which includes the application source (Grants.gov), FOA number (PA16-160), and project grant details. A yellow arrow labeled 'Review' points to the 'Review' link in the central navigation menu.

The main 'Status Information' section shows the application ID '1 R01 DK111624-01A1' and its current status: 'Scientific Review Group review pending. Refer any questions to the Scientific Review Administrator.' It also displays the PI Name, NIH Appl. ID, and Application ID (1 R01 DK 00000-01). A 'Filter' box and 'Expand All', 'Collapse All', and 'Print' buttons are located at the top of this section.

The 'Review' section is expanded, showing details for the 'Application' (Award Document Number, FSR Accepted Code, Snap Indicator Code, Impact Score, Percentile, Early Stage Investigator Eligible, New Investigator Eligible, and Eligible for FFATA Reporting) and the 'Study Section' (Scientific Review Group: CADO, Council Meeting Date: 2017/10, Meeting Date: 06/14/2017, Meeting Time: 08:00). A yellow arrow labeled 'Meeting Date' points to the 'Meeting Date' field in the Study Section details.

# The summary statement of the level I application review contains:

- Critiques from assigned reviewers
- Scores for each review criterion
- Administrative notes by SRO if any
- Program officer contact information



## If your application was discussed at the meeting, also:

- An overall impact/priority score, and in some cases percentile ranking
- A summary of the panel discussion

## Questions about the summary statement?

The assigned program officer has the primary responsibility to answer questions about the completed application review and preparing a new application.

# Reporting concerns about review bias or integrity

With ~1.5K meetings, ~65K apps, ~18K reviewers, ~200K critiques annually, mistakes will occur

For issues related to respectful interactions, bias or anything else that could affect the fairness of the review process, contact your SRO or the CSR Associate Director of Diversity & Workforce Development at [G.Fosu\\_AssocDir@csr.nih.gov](mailto:G.Fosu_AssocDir@csr.nih.gov).



Gabriel Fosu, Ph.D.

For issues related to review integrity, contact your SRO, or the CSR Review Integrity Officer at [csrrio@mail.nih.gov](mailto:csrrio@mail.nih.gov), or the NIH Review Policy Officer at [reviewpolicyofficer@mail.nih.gov](mailto:reviewpolicyofficer@mail.nih.gov).

## Existing CSR policy regarding a potentially flawed/biased review

Assessment by CSR management – is it a flawed review?

- Yes - CSR re-reviews the application in the same council round
- No - CSR refers PI to program officers for guidance on council appeal process

# SROs seek reviewers who are recognized experts in their fields

- Demonstrated scientific expertise, research support
- Mature judgment and breadth of perspective
- Work effectively in a group context
- Impartiality
- Inclusion of women and racial, ethnic minority scientists
- Geographic distribution
- Doctoral degree or equivalent








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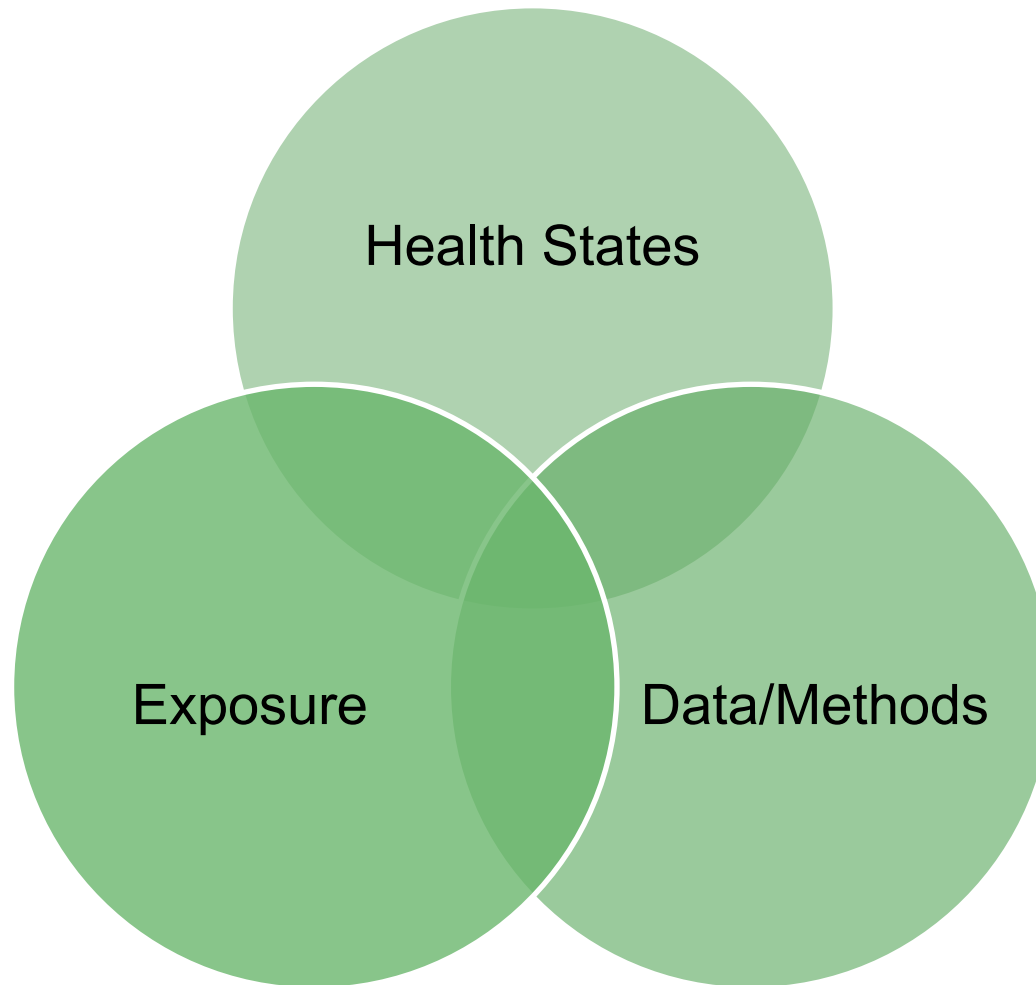


**Jumpstart your career:  
CSR Early Career Reviewer Program**

**Requirements and application:**

**[www.csr.nih.gov/ecr](http://www.csr.nih.gov/ecr)**

# CSR's Division of AIDS, Behavioral and Population Sciences (DABP) Epidemiology and Population Health (EPH) review branch overview



# CSR's Division of AIDS, Behavioral and Population Sciences (DABP) Epidemiology and Population Health (EPH) review branch study sections

- Aging, Injury, Musculoskeletal, & Rheumatologic Disorders
- Analytics & Statistics for Population Research panel A
- Analytics & Statistics for Population Research panel B
- Cancer & Hematologic Disorders
- Cardiovascular & Respiratory Diseases
- Kidney, Endocrine & Digestive Disorders
- Lifestyle & Health Behaviors
- Neurological, Mental & Behavioral Health
- Population-based Research in Infectious Disease
- Reproductive, Perinatal & Pediatric Health
- Social & Environmental Determinants of Health

# CSR DABP EPH data/methods study sections

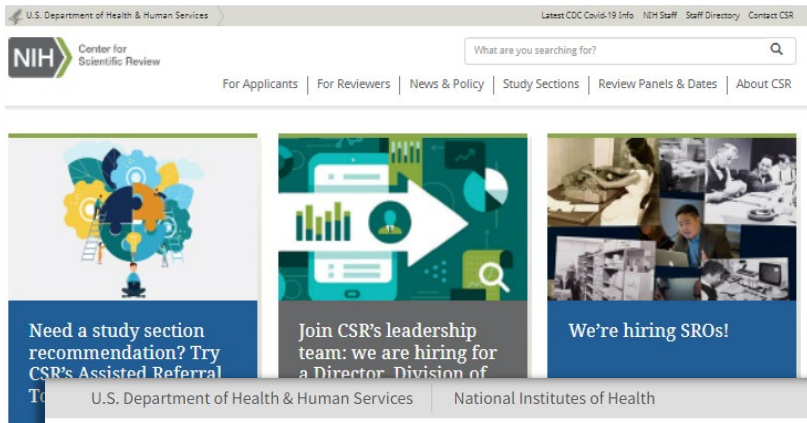
- [Analytics and Statistics for Population Research panel A \(ASPA\)](#)
  - Applications focused on biological or biomarker data from human population health studies including omics studies and clinical trials
- [Analytics and Statistics for Population Research panel B \(ASPB\)](#)
  - Applications focused on observational, environmental, infectious disease, or social/behavioral data and modeling approaches for application to human population health

# Useful resources

- **Webinars - Early Career Reviewer Panel Q&A and Grants 101 -** <https://public.csr.nih.gov/NewsAndPolicy/PeerReviewVideos>
- **Sample applications at** <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications>

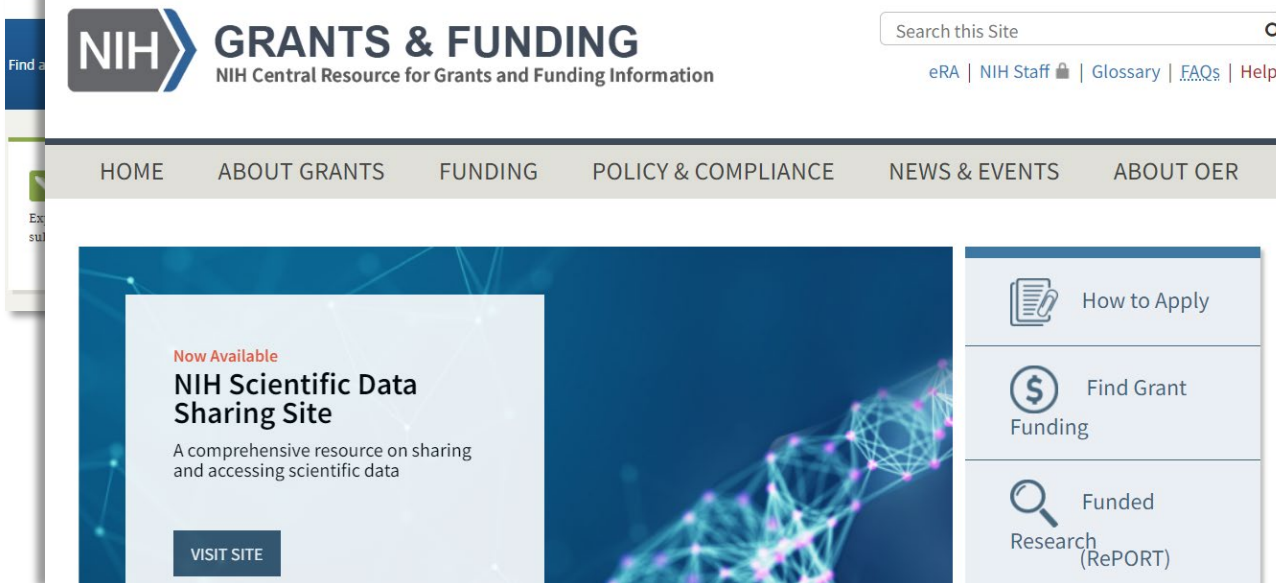
The screenshot displays the NIAID website interface. At the top, a navigation bar includes links for 'Grants & Contracts', 'Clinical Trials', 'News & Events', and 'About NIAID'. A search bar is positioned on the right. Below the navigation, a 'Webinars' section features a card for 'Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Panel Q & A' (Monday - May 24, 2021) with links to 'Meet the Panelists', 'View the Recording', 'Slides', and 'Questions Submitted & Answers'. To the right is a card for 'Grants 101 & Early Career Reviewer Program' (April 14, 2021) with links to 'Recording', 'Slides', and 'Q & A Portion'. Below these, a 'Sample Applications' section lists 'Determine Eligibility', 'Prepare Your Application', and 'Plan Your Budget & Personnel'. On the right, a 'Apply for a Grant' section includes a progress indicator with four steps: 'Find a Funding Opportunity', 'Apply for a Grant', 'After Submitting an Application', and 'Manage Your Award'. The main heading 'Sample Applications & More' is prominently displayed, followed by the text 'Several NIAID investigators have graciously agreed to share their exceptional'.

# Key NIH grant application and review web-pages



NIH Center for Scientific Review

<http://www.csr.nih.gov>



NIH Office of Extramural Research

<http://grants.nih.gov/>