

**CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW  
WORKFORCE PLAN: FY 2002-2003**

1. The mission of the Center for Scientific Review is to coordinate the peer review of the thousands of research and research training grant applications submitted annually. It is the focal point of peer review at the NIH. The number of applications reviewed by CSR has increased from ~ 26,000 in 1993 to ~32,000 in 2000—a 23% increase. This growth is expected to continue and to generate additional staffing requirements. Both the referral of grant applications and grant reviews are coordinated by scientific staff called Scientific Review Administrators (SRAs), who are assisted throughout the review process by grants technical assistants (GTAs). The SRAs and GTAs represent 80% (270 FTE) of the Center's staffing. They are the interface with the extramural grant applicants and administrators, that is, they are the "customer service" component of the Center. In addition to the increasing volume of applications, the increasing complexity of the applications is noteworthy and has affected the staffing requirements. The accelerating changes in science, medicine and technology pose great challenges to the NIH peer review system. Emerging areas of science often do not fit into pre-existing peer review panels; they generate increased workload and require additional staff resources to maintain quality and timely review, as well as to develop innovative approaches to peer review. Over the past five years the Center has allocated resources accordingly to support the core mission by increasing the number of SRAs by 43%. The second emphasis on hiring has been to enhance the level of grants technical assistance. Of the 47 anticipated hires in 2002, 83% are either SRAs or GTAs.
  
2. There is little doubt that the increasing reliance on information technology tools and databases will change the staffing landscape in every workplace. This is particularly true within CSR, where increased automation (the upgrading of the existing IMPAC database system which is used to track grant applications through the NIH system) is expected to decrease the number of support staff needed in CSR, as well as change the skill sets required of support staff. To prepare for this staffing paradigm change, the Center has intentionally replaced through attrition over the last four years about 25% of its grants technical staff positions with temporary employees (student hires, term employees, etc.). New position descriptions were developed and recruitment efforts are now underway to fill new vacancies with employees who possess the enhanced skills that will be required in the future. Substantial resources also have been devoted to enhancing the IT skills of existing staff.  
The impact of the generous NIH budget increases has generated a need for additional staffing to maintain the quality and timeliness of peer review. An innovative initiative that will help with our staffing needs is the "SRA Internship Program" developed in 2001. The purpose of the internship program is to provide training opportunities in science administration within the Center for biomedical research scientists who are interested in pursuing careers in science administration. Up to six candidates will be selected from the NIH Intramural Program in 2001, and will receive "hands-on" professional training and mentoring by an experienced CSR SRA. If successful, the program is proposed for expansion in FY2002, and recruitment will be broadened to include the extramural community. We believe that this program will serve several purposes: it will offer training in alternative careers to bench scientists; it will provide flexible staffing assistance within the Center; and, it will energize the existing CSR SRA workforce by creating a stimulating teaching and mentoring environment.  
For the first time in its 50-year history, a comprehensive evaluation of the structure of review was recently initiated by a panel of external scientific advisors. The President of the National Academy of Sciences chaired the panel. They have recommended a comprehensive reorganization of peer review panels to be better aligned with the current state of science and more responsive to emerging areas and changing directions in science. There will undoubtedly be resource implications as the reorganization efforts progress over the next three to four years, but it is premature to predict these at this stage of the process.
  
3. In addition to the support staffing paradigm shift described above, in FY2000 the Center contracted out the desktop and LAN support that had previously been provided by federal staff. The cost of providing IT services decreased while the quality of support provided increased substantially. CSR provides consultant reimbursement services to twelve other Institutes/Centers at NIH through a "service center" arrangement to aid them in reimbursing scientists used to conduct peer review within the other Institutes. This has resulted in staffing economies of scale across the NIH. In addition, CSR has "purchased"

procurement services from one of the aforementioned ICs, meaning that CSR has not had to hire its own procurement staff. However, in other administrative areas, CSR is very thinly staffed—in fact, so thinly staffed that it has been hard pressed to deliver quality scientific support. In addition, there is a dire shortage of senior management staff to plan, monitor, oversee, and coordinate activities. It is difficult to envision other consolidation efforts that would not adversely impact the support needed by our scientific staff.

4. CSR has just been approved for an additional 15,000 square feet of office space to accommodate new scientific hires, although much of the new space will not be available until January 2002. Once the space can be renovated, it should be ample for 2002 and 2003. CSR is participating in the NIH telecommuting pilot to test the feasibility of SRAs working from home. Since March, seven SRAs have been working at least two days a week from home. In addition, several voucher examiner positions may soon be included in the telecommute pilot. It is much too early to know how these pilots will impact space needs.
5. Five additional supervisory positions may be added in each of the next two years. Again, these represent an important paradigm shift that will allow supervisory scientific staff to focus more of their time and efforts on coordinating scientific peer review. By establishing a modest number of supervisory support positions, our scientific supervisors will be able to provide a higher level of support to the applicant community.
6. See response to number 2. In addition, increased automation has allowed the support staff ratio to be reduced from 1:1 about 7 years ago to 0.8:1 currently. Additional reductions are anticipated.
7. (See response to number 4) Over 1/3 of the CSR staff are participating in alternative work schedules, which have been very well received. Both AWS and telecommuting may enhance our ability to recruit the best scientific and scientific support staff.
8. Supervisors are required to take supervisory training and to meet face-to-face with employees they supervise at least twice a year to discuss performance. New staff are monitored very closely during the probationary period. We recently formed an alliance with another Center to tap into their expertise in Employee Relations, when needed.
9. CSR has the highest proportion of extramural scientific staff eligible to retire at NIH. Sixty of our current 134 SRAs are eligible to retire by the end of 2005. On average, 9-10 SRAs have left CSR in each of the last two years, and a similar number of departures in the future is anticipated. All of the HR staff are eligible to retire in the next few years. Buyouts or VERA could be useful if targeted to the areas where staffing shifts are likely to occur, i.e. in the support staff arena. However, if offered broadly, it might create a scientific staffing crisis, since many of our scientific staff could leave and immediately begin a lucrative career in consulting. (Scientific consultants now charge between \$50-\$85/hour.) This could literally cripple our ability to manage peer review, since recruitments for new scientific staff are so labor and time-intensive.
10. Other issues – it is critical that CSR receive its funding in a manner that is commensurate with other scientific components at NIH. The current funding system requires other Institutes and Centers to reduce their operating expenses in order to fund CSR. This is an inherent conflict-of-interest. In addition, the timing of CSR funding presents significant challenges to workforce planning since the allocation is significantly delayed relative to the funding Institutes/Centers.

## CSR Hiring Plans for FYs 2002/2003

	FY 2002	FY 2003	Total
<b>INTRAMURAL</b>			
Senior Investigators <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0
Investigators <sup>1</sup>	0	0	0
Other MD/PhDs, in FTE positions	0	0	0
Other MD/PhDs in non-FTE positions (IRTA, VF)	0	0	0
Other lab/clinical staff => GS-13	0	0	0
Other lab/clinical staff =< GS-12	0	0	0
Admin/support staff => GS-13	0	0	0
Admin/support staff =< GS-12	0	0	0
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above (include summer IRTAs)	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL INTRAMURAL</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>EXTRAMURAL</b>			
HSA/SRAs and other senior level science administrators => GS-13	24	16	40
Other science administration positions =< GS-12	2	1	3
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff => GS-13 <sup>3</sup>	0	0	0
Grants Management and R&D Contract Staff =< GS-12 <sup>3</sup>	15	15	30
Administrative and support staff => GS-13	3	3	6
Administrative and support staff =< GS-12	3	3	6
Infrastructure support => GS-13	0	0	0
Infrastructure support =< GS-12 <sup>2</sup>	0	0	0
Summer and other temps not listed above	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL EXTRAMURAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>85</b>
<b>IC TOTAL</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>85</b>
<sup>1</sup> Using OIR professional designations			
<sup>2</sup> Include all wage grade positions related to infrastructure in this group			
<sup>3</sup> Includes 1101, 1102, 301 and 303 series where individual is engaged in these activities on a full-time basis.			