

Grant Application Review Process

Last Approved:	NOAMA Board	June 22, 2021
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1. Background

The Northern Ontario Academic Medicine Association (NOAMA) Board with the support of the Physician Clinical Teachers' Association (PCTA) has granting opportunities for Participating Physicians. The Grant Committees manage process and formulate recommendations for the NOAMA Board.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to outline guidelines for the review of NOAMA grant applications.

3. Principles

The review process will be steered by the following principles:

- a) Fairness;
- b) Reproducibility;
- c) Confidentiality;
- d) Transparent Process;
- e) Effective Management of Conflict of Interest.

4. Review Team recruitment processes

The Review Team is to be distinguished from the Grant Committees. Committee members will be invited to be part of the Review Team. Review team members are invited at the discretion of the Executive Director (ED) as needed. The Committee Chairs will Chair the Review Team meetings.

NOAMA invites experts with various perspectives to become members of the Review Team to:

- a) evaluate applications submitted for funding opportunity;
- b) rate them on their merit using a defined set of evaluation criteria so NOAMA can rank them in order of priority for funding.

Factors leading to an invitation to a Review Team:

- a) previous experience with CIOF or AFP review process;
- b) previous successful grant applications to NOAMA or other granting organizations;
- c) displayed interest in clinical research;
- d) recommendations from fellow PCTA members;
- e) the ED will aim to have a balanced Review Team with urban and rural members across Northern Ontario, including a mix of generalists and specialists.

Factors leading to not being granted a repeat invitation to a Review Team:

- a) lack of complete disclosure of conflict of interest;
- b) abnormal scoring patterns including, not limited to outlier scores, perceived bias;
- c) lack of timeliness or reliability in communication or review process;
- d) breach of regulation of an active NOAMA grant.

5. Project Review Procedures

- a) All projects that meet the application criteria for submission will be reviewed by the Review Team.
- b) Members of the Committee and Review Team are not eligible to apply for Funding opportunities during their term on the related committee. Lead physicians applying for Funding are considered to have a conflict of interest with respect to participation on the NOAMA and PCTA Boards, and the Grant Committees. They are required to recuse themselves from discussions regarding funding recommendations.
- c) Members of the Review Team will be provided the complete list of projects including project description, project lead, and team members. They will be required to declare any conflicts as well as agree to a confidentiality agreement.
- d) Each member will review projects assigned to them and will evaluate each of the projects based on the established evaluation criteria.
- e) Each project will initially be evaluated by two Review Committee members based on the Evaluation Criteria.

6. Evaluation Criteria

In the evaluation process, the Committee will address: Does the project positively impact direct patient care?

The following four criteria will be considered in the evaluation process.

- a) Project Impact;
- b) Project Merit;
- c) Project Team;
- d) Assessment.

Each category will be scored out of 5. The four scores will then be averaged, with each grant submission receiving a final score of 0-5.

7. Ranking and Funding

Upon receiving the completed evaluations, the NOAMA office will produce a ranked list of scored grant submissions. Grants receiving a score of greater than or equal to 3.5 will be considered for funding.

There will be sufficient time (approximately 2 weeks) between the original scoring deadline and the Review Team meeting to ensure resolution of scoring issues.

8. Scoring Issues

- a) Where evaluation of an application results in reviewer scoring discrepancy of **greater than or equal to 2**, and one reviewer has scored the application above 3.5, the application's original final score will be discarded, and the application will be re-evaluated by two additional committee members who were not involved in the original review. The grant will only be discussed on teleconference if new secondary scoring yields discrepancy of ≥ 0.5 . If the new secondary score has a ≥ 1 discrepancy, the original evaluation scores, plus the secondary evaluation scores will be averaged.
- b) Where evaluation of an application results in reviewer scoring discrepancy of **greater than or equal to 1, but less than 2**, and one reviewer has scored the application above 3.5, the application will be reviewed by a third reviewer, and the final score will be an average of the three scores. If the final score is >3.0 , it will be discussed on the Review Team teleconference.
- c) Where evaluation of an application results in reviewer scoring discrepancy of **greater than or equal to 0.5, but less than 1**, and one reviewer has scored the application above 3.5, the application will be discussed on the Review Team teleconference.

Scoring Issue*	Plan
Discrepancy ≥ 2	Score discarded; two new reviewers
Discrepancy ≥ 1 and < 2	Add third reviewer; average three scores
Discrepancy ≥ 0.5 and < 1	Discussion on Review Team teleconference

* to trigger this secondary review, one of the reviewers must have scored the grant >3.5

- d) Extreme outlying scores will be addressed by the above mechanisms. Individual scores of <1.0 or >4.75 will be reviewed by the Committee Chair and the NOAMA ED. If these scores are deemed to be inappropriate, the Chair and ED will debrief with the assessor.
- e) The NOAMA ED will assign grants to Review Team members with no stated conflict of interest. When possible, the ED will have at least one reviewer have expertise in the area of the proposal.
- f) All grants will be available for reading by all Review Team Members prior to review teleconference. If a reviewer has declared a conflict of interest, they will be asked not to read that grant, nor comment during the discussion of that grant.
- g) New reviewers will be trained by:
 - i. Being provided previously scored grant(s) with feedback;
 - ii. Attending a meeting with the Committee Chair and NOAMA ED;
 - iii. Being paired with an experienced reviewer for mentorship.

9. Review Team Teleconference

The following grant applications will be discussed on the Review Team Teleconference:

- a) Reviewer discrepancy ≥ 0.5 and < 1
- b) Reviewer discrepancy ≥ 1 and < 2 , and new total score >3.0

The following grant applications will not be discussed on the Review Team Teleconference:

- a) Review discrepancy is <0.5
- b) Discrepancy >0.5 , both reviews >3.5 , and clearly will be funded
- c) Discrepancy >0.5 , both reviews <3.5 , and clearly will NOT be funded
- d) Average of the reviewers' initial ratings is < 3.50 ; and,
 - i. there is no request from committee members to discuss the application

There is an expectation that review team members attend the meeting. However, in the exceptional circumstances that do not permit a members' attendance at the review team teleconference, NOAMA administration will attempt to connect reviewers before the meeting to discuss any discrepancy and adjust scoring accordingly. If a discussion is not feasible, NOAMA will attempt other means (share completed evaluations) to ensure all grants have a fair opportunity at the review team discussion.

10. Funding Process

Notification of NOAMA Board funding decisions will be communicated in writing to the applicants after the NOAMA Board meeting.

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Version	Date	Authors/Comments
1.0	2017.11.13	Original policy
2.0	2018.12.18	
3.0	2020.03.30	
4.0	2022.06.21	Combine AFP/CIOF review process