Women First Research Coalition

October 13, 2026

Dr. Raymond Jacobson
Director
Center for Scientific Review (CSR)
National Institutes of Health
6701 Rockledge Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817

Re: Request for Information (RFI) on Proposed Changes to Reporting Outcomes from NIH Peer Review (NOT-OD-26-088)

Dear Dr. Jacobson,

The Women First Research Coalition (WFRC) appreciates the opportunity to provide input on the request for information on "Proposed Changes to Reporting Outcomes from NIH Peer Review". We strongly oppose the National Institutes of Health's (NIH) proposal to replace final impact scores and percentiles with three broad categories ("Most Competitive," "Competitive," and "Not Discussed") when reporting peer review outcomes.

WFRC is a coalition comprised of the nation's leading professional medical and research organizations specializing in women's health. Our coalition was formed to address pressing challenges in women's health research and to raise awareness among federal policymakers, Executive Branch officials, and the public about the need for sustained and strengthened investment in women's health research.

While WFRC appreciates and supports NIH's efforts to improve and strengthen the peer review system, we are concerned that eliminating numerical impact scores and percentiles would undermine a fair and transparent peer review and move NIH away from a grantmaking process in which peer review outcomes and scientific merit remain central to award decisions. Transparency is essential to maintaining confidence that awards are based principally on peer review outcomes and scientific excellence. This is especially consequential for fields such as women's health research that have historically been under-resourced and where continued progress depends on a grantmaking system that fairly recognizes high-quality science.

Final impact scores and percentiles not only help investigators understand award decisions, but also give investigators important context for interpreting written comments and determining whether and how to revise and resubmit an application. The proposed broad categories would provide substantially less information about how an application fared in comparison to other applications and could make it more challenging for investigators to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses of their proposals. Failing to provide final impact scores could also limit program officers' ability to advise investigators who often rely on NIH staff to inform future applications.

We also encourage NIH to strengthen the participation of subject matter experts in women's health, and related fields, on study sections so applications are evaluated by reviewers who understand the relevant

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science, populations, methodologies, and research needs. Maintaining strong peer review, coupled with communication of more meaningful information about its outcomes, are critical to ensuring a fair and transparent grantmaking process and maintaining the research community's confidence in NIH funding decisions. This is particularly important for women's health research, where longstanding gaps in research, and a limited pool of reviewers with specialized expertise, can already create challenges in ensuring applications receive appropriate scientific review.

WFRC therefore urges NIH to retain numerical overall impact scores and percentiles while providing more detailed information about funding decisions, including the factors beyond peer review that most significantly contributed to an application being funded or not. NIH should provide investigators with clear explanations in summary statements when highly rated applications are not funded, including the primary considerations that influenced the funding decision; increased transparency regarding the geographic and institutional distribution of NIH funding; and ensure study sections include appropriate subject matter expertise, including expertise in women's health research. Together, these steps would strengthen transparency while reinforcing rigorous peer review and scientific merit as the foundation of NIH grantmaking.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Erika Miller at emiller@dc-crd.com.

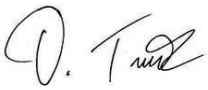
Sincerely,



Brett Einerson, MD, MPH, FACOG
Chair, Women First Research Coalition



Marcelle I. Cedars, MD
Chair-Elect, Women First Research Coalition



David Turok, MD, MPH, FACOG
Immediate Past Chair, Women First Research Coalition