



CIHR IRSC

Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

Project Grant Competition
MOCK REVIEW TOOLKIT
College of Reviewers, CIHR

Discoveries for life



**PEER
REVIEW**



Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

Canada

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION **4**

PEER REVIEW AT CIHR	4
Adjudication Models	5
Committee Members	5
OVERVIEW OF THE MOCK REVIEW TOOLKIT	6
Purpose	6
Resources	6
Intended Audience	7
MOCK REVIEW SIMULATION AT A GLANCE	8

SELECTING A SIMULATION **10**

QUESTIONNAIRE – GOALS, AUDIENCE, AND SCOPE OF SIMULATION	10
SELECT A SIMULATION TYPE	11

PLANNING THE SIMULATION **14**

LOGISTICS PLANNING	14
Draft High-Level Timelines	14
Select Location	14
INVITE FACILITATOR AND COMMITTEE EXECUTIVES	15
(Optional) Identify and Invite Facilitator(s)	15
Identify and Invite Committee Executives	15
PROMOTE MOCK REVIEW SIMULATION	16
Prepare Promotional Materials	16
Send Promotional Materials	16
SELECT APPLICATIONS	17
Identify Where Applications Will Be Sourced.	17
Select Applications.	17
SELECT AND INVITE REVIEWERS	19
Select Reviewers	19
Invite Reviewers	19
PRE-SIMULATION TRAINING MATERIALS	20
At-Home Learning	20
(Optional) Pre-Simulation Training Session	21
(Optional) Drop-In Q&A	21

RUNNING THE SIMULATION **22****ASSIGNING APPLICATIONS AND AT-HOME REVIEWS** **22**

(Optional) Ability to Review Task 22

Assign Applications to Reviewers. 23

Send Applications to Reviewers. 23

COMMITTEE MEETING **24**

Committee Meeting Agenda and Confirmation 24

Run the Committee Meeting 24

Reviewer Scripts 30

POST-SIMULATION **31****DEBRIEF AND POST-SIMULATION SURVEY** **31****FEEDBACK TO PROJECT GRANT APPLICANTS –
INTERNAL SIMULATIONS** **31**

LIST OF RESOURCES **32**

INTRODUCTION

PEER REVIEW AT CIHR



Please note, while the College will continually update the Toolkit, information provided through the CIHR website will always be the most up-to-date and should be used in cases where information differs from that provided in the Toolkit

Peer review refers to the process used by CIHR to review applications submitted for funding. Applications are assigned to Reviewers who have, individually or collectively, the required experience and expertise to assess the quality and the potential impact of the proposed research and the research-related activities, within the context of the funding opportunity objectives. As applicable, CIHR invites experts with various perspectives from the health research community (e.g. health researchers, health related professionals, policy makers, community leaders, patients, citizens, etc.) to become members of a Peer Review Committee (PRC) to:

- evaluate applications submitted for a particular funding opportunity;
- rate them on their merit using a defined set of evaluation criteria so they can be ranked by CIHR in order of priority for funding; and,
- make recommendations on the budget needed to support the application.¹

PRCs make recommendations for funding to CIHR and partners, who in turn make the final funding decisions.

For more information on [Peer Review at CIHR](#), please visit our website .

Types of Peer Review Processes

Committees typically run using two fundamental review processes: an in-person/teleconference meeting or a virtual review.²



The **in-person meeting** is typical of the Project Grant competition – Reviewers are assigned applications to review at-home before they convene to discuss and rate the applications via a face-to-face meeting, teleconference, or video conference.



The **virtual review** is typical of the Doctoral Awards competition – Reviewers complete an electronic, at home review only. Virtual Reviewers do not discuss applications unless there are sufficient discrepancies in the Reviewers' scores.

1. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/39380.html> 

2. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/4656.html#2.2> 

Adjudication Models

Committees also use a variety of adjudication models to evaluate applications, with each funding opportunity usually incorporating more than one.

1. **Relevance Review** is used when it is important for applications to be relevant to, or in alignment with, targeted research components of the Funding Opportunity (FO). The relevance review process typically takes place prior to the peer review process. Applications will be assessed using specific criteria and then those deemed relevant will proceed to the next step.
2. **Scientific review** is the standard review mechanism for assessing the scientific excellence of proposals submitted to a competition. It uses a clear set of evaluation criteria to measure key aspects of the proposals in relation to the main scope and objectives of the FO.
3. **Merit review** is a type of review that uses separate scores or ratings for potential impact and scientific merit. In general, the potential impact score of an application reflects the importance of the project to the knowledge-users and the likelihood that it will have a substantive and sustainable impact on health outcomes, practice, programs and/or policy in the study context.³
4. **Iterative review** is a process used in the Project Grant competition to review applications with a central focus on carrying out ethical and culturally competent research involving Indigenous peoples, with the intent to promote health through research that is in keeping with Indigenous values and traditions. These applications may be reviewed by the Indigenous Health Research (IHR) Committee. The IHR Committee may deem an application eligible for the Iterative Peer Review Process. The objective of the Iterative Peer Review Process is to allow applicants whose applications have been deemed excellent, the opportunity to provide minor clarifications that would see the application improved to become outstanding.⁴

Committee Members

A CIHR review committee typically consists of Reviewers and usually a Chair and Scientific Officer, depending on the needs of the adjudication model. Individual committee members are selected for their knowledge, expertise and/or experience. PRC membership as a whole considers one or more of the following aspects:

- the need to cover the full range of research areas, relevant methodologies, key populations and experience for which the committee is responsible;
- the necessity for reviewing capability in both English and French so that applications in either official language can be evaluated by the committee; and,
- the need for regional representation and representation by gender proportionate to membership in the Canadian health research community.⁵

For more information regarding the [Project Grant Competition](#), please visit our website .

3. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/4656.html#2.3> 

4. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/49564.html#4.2.4> 

5. <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/39380.html> 

OVERVIEW OF THE MOCK REVIEW TOOLKIT

Purpose



Please note, that while this Toolkit focuses on the Peer Review process used in the Project Grant Competition, CIHR recognizes the need for additional resources for those who review for other funding programs at CIHR. Additional resources will be developed in the future to meet these needs.

The Toolkit was designed to raise awareness of the peer review process at CIHR and help individuals improve their peer review skills and grantsmanship. The Mock Review Toolkit contains the necessary resources to simulate the CIHR Project Grant Peer Review Process, including three suggested simulation models - a Light, Full and Internal simulation model – which can be adapted as required. In this regard, the Toolkit can stand alone as a peer review resource or be used as guide to help users run their own mock review simulation or internal peer review process. We strongly recommend that interested parties read the Toolkit in its entirety prior to running any simulation.

Resources



Unless otherwise indicated, such as the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement, resources referenced throughout the Toolkit are optional templates that serve as suggestions to help support Facilitators during the process.

The Toolkit collates all necessary Project Competition peer review resources, as well as additional supporting materials, to allow users to conduct a mock review simulation. Additional supportive materials, such as sample emails or templates, can be found throughout the Toolkit and are clearly labelled by an accompanying icon, as shown below for the Facilitator Training Presentation. You can also find a comprehensive list of all supportive materials in the [list of resources](#) section, which provides users with a single, easy to access location to quickly identify and locate necessary resources. Resources include :

- template spreadsheets to plan logistics, including Reviewer and application assignments and tracking of timelines and deadlines
- template invitation emails and promotional materials for the mock review simulation
- a conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement for both facilitators and participants
- pre-simulation training materials and presentations for participants
- all materials necessary to run a Committee meeting, including support documents such as:
 - > review template
 - > SO note template
 - > mock applications, mock reviews & mock SO notes

Intended Audience

This Mock Review Toolkit is designed for Research Institutions, CIHR Institutes, partners and others that are interested in facilitating a Committee meeting to improve understanding of how the peer review process at CIHR works. **This Toolkit is appropriate for any researchers who are looking to learn more about CIHR's peer review process – irrespective of their career stage – including Trainees (pre- and postdoctoral) and new faculty, as well as content experts and knowledge holders and users.**

Facilitator(s):

The Facilitator(s) acts as an administrator and is responsible for designing and delivering the simulation from start to finish, including: planning and organizing the simulation, coordinating applications and Reviewers, ensuring that all participants receive necessary pre-simulation training and/or materials, running the Committee meeting proper, and ensuring feedback is collected and collated. The Facilitator(s) can also take on the role of Chair or Scientific Officer if no other person has been appointed to the role(s).

Participants

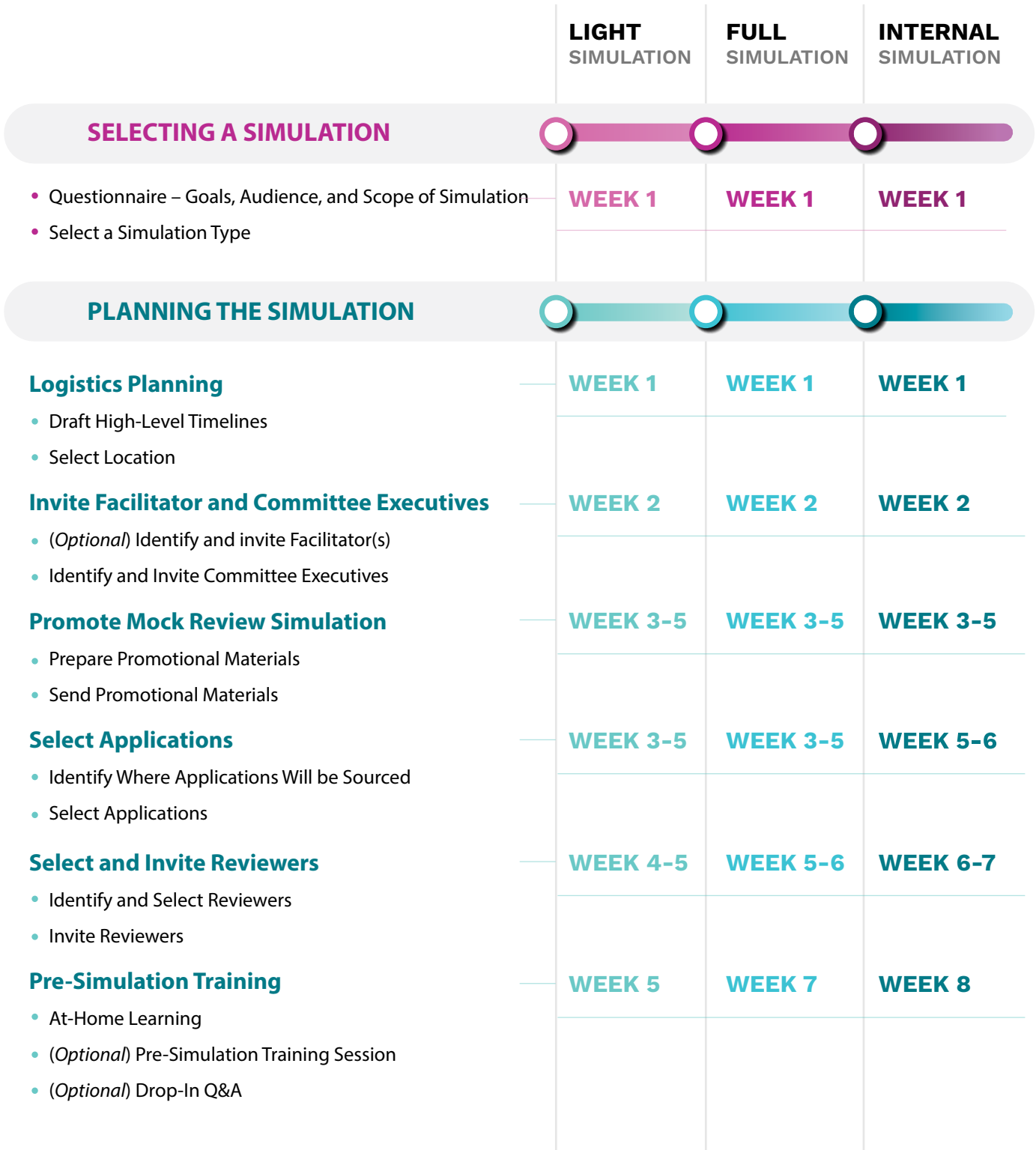
Reviewers: Reviewers are the primary participant in the mock simulation. Reviewers are assigned applications to review, score, and present at the face-to-face meeting. Reviewers will also participate in general committee discussion and provide scores for all other applications.

Chair: The committee Chair has the role of moderator during the Committee meeting. It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that the review committee functions smoothly, effectively, and objectively. The Chair maintains a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment, in which research proposals are evaluated.

Scientific Officer: The Scientific Officer (SO) is responsible for supporting the Chair in his/her role during the Committee meeting. The SO take official notes of the committee discussions for each application. The role of SO can also be fulfilled by either the Facilitator or a Reviewer who can switch between roles depending on the application being reviewed.

MOCK REVIEW SIMULATION AT A GLANCE

The graphic below provides a high-level overview of how to select, plan, train for, and run one of the three types of mock simulation covered by the Toolkit.



	LIGHT SIMULATION	FULL SIMULATION	INTERNAL SIMULATION
RUNNING THE SIMULATION			
Assigning Applications and At-Home Reviews	WEEK 6	WEEK 7-8	WEEK 8-10
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Optional) Ability to Review Task • Assign Applications to Reviewers • Send Applications to Reviewers 			
Committee Meeting	WEEK 7	WEEK 9-10	WEEK 11-12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee Meeting Agenda and Confirmation • Run the Committee Meeting 			
POST-SIMULATION			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debrief and Post-Simulation Survey • Feedback to Project Grant applicants – Internal Simulations 	WEEK 8	WEEK 10-11	WEEK 13-15

SELECTING A SIMULATION

TASKS

- Questionnaire – Goals, Audience, and Scope of Simulation
- Select a Simulation Type

WEEK 1

LIGHT
SIMULATION

WEEK 1

FULL
SIMULATION

WEEK 1

INTERNAL
SIMULATION



Use the questionnaire below to define the goals, audience and scope of your simulation and, based on your answers, use the proceeding descriptions of each simulation type to select a simulation.

QUESTIONNAIRE – GOALS, AUDIENCE, AND SCOPE OF SIMULATION

What are your Goals?

- A quick overview of peer review, including a short mock Committee meeting as part of a workshop? If so, consider the **Light Simulation**.
- To fully simulate the Project Grant Peer Review process, including a fully simulated committee meeting? If so, consider the **Full Simulation**.
- To conduct an internal review process for applications from your own Institution to improve quality? If so, the **Internal Simulation** is appropriate.

Who is your Audience and what is their Scope of Expertise?

- Are you planning for participants with a broad scope of expertise and would like to have Committees focused on a broad [Themes](#)? If so, consider the **Light Simulation**.
- Are you planning for participants with varying expertise and require flexibility in the form of multiple Committees focused on different [Themes](#), [Areas of Science](#) or [Project Mandates](#)? If so, consider the **Full Simulation**.

How many mock applications can you dedicate to the committee meeting?

- Do you have fewer applications on hand, or only a limited time set aside for the Committee meeting itself? If so, the **Light Simulation** is more appropriate
- Are you planning to have many mock applications, and are looking to dedicate a half-day to a simulated Committee meeting? If so, the **Full or Internal Simulation** is more appropriate

What is your overall timeline?

- Do you have to run the simulation on a compressed timeline, or on short notice? If so, the **Light Simulation** might be preferable.

SELECT A SIMULATION TYPE

SIMULATION TYPE	GOALS, AUDIENCE AND DESCRIPTION	LOGISTICS
<p>LIGHT SIMULATION</p>	<p>Goal This simulation is designed to provide a first glimpse of the peer review process at CIHR.</p> <p>Audience Can be used by a broad audience consisting of a broad scope of expertise and can accommodate the greatest number of participants.</p> <p>Description Reviewers are assigned 1-2 application(s) to review at home prior to attending the mock review meeting. At the meeting, participants will breakout into smaller Committees of 6-8 Reviewers with an experienced reviewer acting as Chair for each. Reviewers will discuss the mock applications in their respective Committees before reconvening as a larger group for a facilitated discussion focused on peer review.</p> <p>Applications Mock applications are provided through the Toolkit or provided by the Facilitator. Suggest 1-2 applications per simulation, where all participants across Committees review the same applications covering a broad Theme.</p> <p>Please note, these are simply suggestions for the number of committees and their scope. You may choose to alter the parameters of a simulation type as needed. For example, in the Light Simulation, each committee can instead focus on a specific Areas of Science or Project Mandates where each committee reviews a unique set of applications.</p>	<p>Time Required</p> <p>Total Length: 4-8 weeks</p> <p>Planning: ~4 weeks</p> <p>Reviewer preparation: ~1-2 hours (~3-4 with optional Pre-simulation Training Session)</p> <p>Committee meeting: 1.5-3 hours <i>*based on 1-3 applications total for review</i></p> <p>Participants</p> <p>2 Facilitators</p> <p>6-8 Reviewers per Committee (ideal)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i># of Reviewers and Committees depends on available Chairs</i> <p>1 Chair per Committee</p> <p>1 or more Scientific Officers per Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Reviewers or Facilitators may rotate the role of a Scientific Officer.</i>

SIMULATION TYPE	GOALS, AUDIENCE AND DESCRIPTION	LOGISTICS
<p>FULL SIMULATION</p>	<p>Goal This simulation is designed to replicate a Project peer review process at CIHR.</p> <p>Audience Suited to trainees, postdoctoral fellows and early career researchers who would like to get hands-on peer review experience. Participant scope of expertise may be diverse.</p> <p>Description Reviewers are assigned 2-4 applications to review prior to attending the Committee meeting. Participants will convene as a Committee, where they will present, discuss, and score their assigned applications, with an experienced Reviewer acting as Chair.</p> <p>Applications Mock applications are provided through the Toolkit or provided by the Facilitator. Suggest 4-8 applications per Committee. Each application is reviewed by up to 3 Reviewers and each Reviewer reviews 2-4 applications. Application pool can be diverse across Committees covering various Themes, Areas of Science or Project committee Mandates.</p> <p>Please note, these are simply suggestions for the number of Committees and their scope. You may choose to alter the parameters of a simulation type as needed. For example, in the Full Simulation, a single Committee can be run with a focus on a broad Themes instead.</p>	<p>Time Required</p> <p>Total Length: 9-11 weeks</p> <p>Planning: ~10 weeks</p> <p>Reviewer preparation: ~2-3 hours (4-5 hours with optional Pre-simulation Training Session)</p> <p>Committee meeting: 3-5 hours</p> <p>Participants</p> <p>2 Facilitators</p> <p>9 Reviewers per Committee (ideal)</p> <p>1 Chair per Committee</p> <p>1 or more Scientific Officers per Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewers or Facilitators may rotate the role of a Scientific Officer to gain experience.

SIMULATION TYPE	GOALS, AUDIENCE AND DESCRIPTION	LOGISTICS
<p>INTERNAL SIMULATION</p>	<p>Goal This simulation is designed to be used as an internal review process. The Facilitator would seek draft applications for an upcoming Project Grant competition from their institution for use in the simulation.</p> <p>Audience This simulation is applicable to both less experienced and highly experienced Reviewers. Participant expertise can be broad (all Themes) or narrow (a particular Area of Science)</p> <p>Description Follows same process as Full Simulation; however, both the Scientific Officer and Reviewer written comments will be provided to the applicant following the Committee meeting to improve their grant prior to submission.</p> <p>Applications Internal applications provided by own institution. Suggest 4-8 applications per Committee. Each application is reviewed by up to 3 Reviewers. Application pool can be broad (cover all Themes) or narrow (a specific Theme, Area of Science or Project Committee Mandate) depending on your planned Audience.</p>	<p>Time Required</p> <p>Total Length: 13-15 weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must begin a minimum of 16 weeks prior to the Project Grant deadline <p>Planning: ~12-14 weeks</p> <p>Reviewer preparation: ~3-4 hours (5-6 with optional Pre-simulation Training Session)</p> <p>Committee meeting: 3-5 hours</p> <p>Participants</p> <p>2 Facilitators</p> <p>9 Reviewers per Committee (ideal)</p> <p>1 Chair per Committee.</p> <p>1 or more Scientific Officer per Committee</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewers may rotate the role of a Scientific Officer to gain experience.

PLANNING THE SIMULATION

LOGISTICS PLANNING

TASKS

- Draft High-Level Timelines
- Select Location

WEEK 1

LIGHT
SIMULATION

WEEK 1

FULL
SIMULATION

WEEK 1

INTERNAL
SIMULATION

Draft High-Level Timelines

- Establish a promotion and invitation period, including a registration deadline, for potential participants.
- For the **Internal Simulation**, establish a call for internal applications, including a deadline for their submission.
- Establish deadlines for tasks that should be completed prior to the Committee meeting, which include Reviewer's declaring their conflict of interest, ability to review, and submitting their reviews.
- Identify the date and time for the Committee meeting and the Pre-Simulation Training Session (**optional**).

Select Location

Select the location for the Committee meeting and the Pre-Simulation Training Session (**optional**).

- If the Committee meeting and/or Pre-Simulation Training Session is in-person, select a location based on the number of Reviewers in the simulation.
- If the Committee meeting and/or Pre-Simulation Training Session is virtual, identify the conference platform to use (MS Teams, Zoom, etc.).

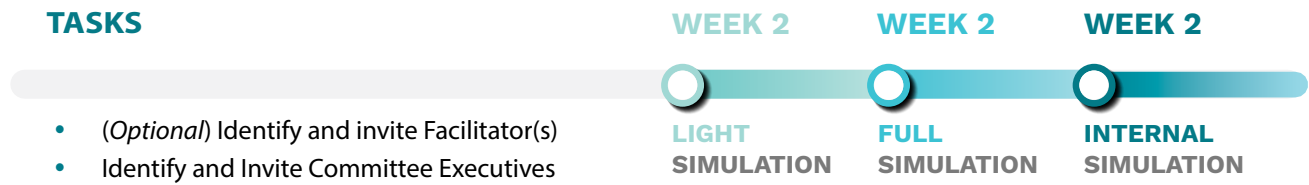
Resources



Master Planner *(Please contact the [College of Reviewers](#) for this resource)*

This document contains multiple worksheets to help Facilitators plan and run their simulation, including: example timelines, worksheets to track participants, conflicts of interest, and ability to review responses, as well as worksheets to help organize and assign applications.

INVITE FACILITATOR AND COMMITTEE EXECUTIVES




(Optional) Identify and Invite Facilitator(s)

- Identify and invite the lead Facilitator for the simulation if it is someone other than yourself.
- If the Committee meeting is virtual, or you plan on having multiple Committees, consider inviting a second or third Facilitator.

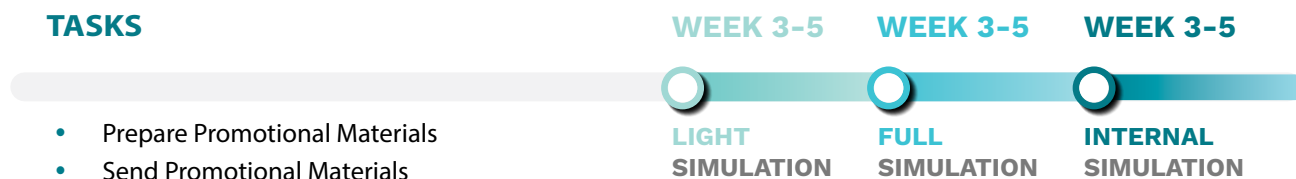
Identify and Invite Committee Executives

- Select the Chair(s) and Scientific Officer(s) based on their previous CIHR review experience.
 - > The Chair should be an experienced reviewer who has participated in review for the Project Grant Competition at CIHR.
 - > Scientific Officers can either be an experienced reviewer, or you can have Facilitators and/or Reviewer participants rotate through the role.
- Assign the Chair and Scientific Officer(s) to the Committee(s)
 - > 1 experienced Chair, and 1-2 Scientific Officers, per Committee is suggested.

Resources

 Sample Email: Invitation Committee Executives

PROMOTE MOCK REVIEW SIMULATION



Prepare Promotional Materials

- Use the Promotional Materials for Simulation sample email below to help prepare your own promotional materials to advertise the mock review simulation.
 - > The promotion period should include a registration and selection process for potential Reviewers and clearly list any eligibility criteria or restrictions on participation, particularly if specific expertise is required or limited spots are available.
 - > Ask potential Reviewers to indicate their expertise as part of the registration process. This will assist Facilitators in selecting applications to use in the simulation.
- For **Internal Simulations**, use the Call for Internal Applications sample email below to prepare a call for internal applications.
 - > Identify how internal applications will be solicited. Who will be contacted? What are the selection criteria? What is the submission deadline? What are the constraints, if any, on Theme(s) and/or Area(s) of Science? Are there any individuals applicants would prefer not review their applications?

Send Promotional Materials

- Send promotional materials to potential mock Reviewers by email and/or advertise the simulation through a web posting.
- For **Internal Simulations**, send a call for internal applications to upcoming Project Grant applicants within your institution.
- **(Optional)** Identify and invite guest speakers for the Pre-Simulation Training Session – see [Pre-Simulation Training](#) for more information.

Resources



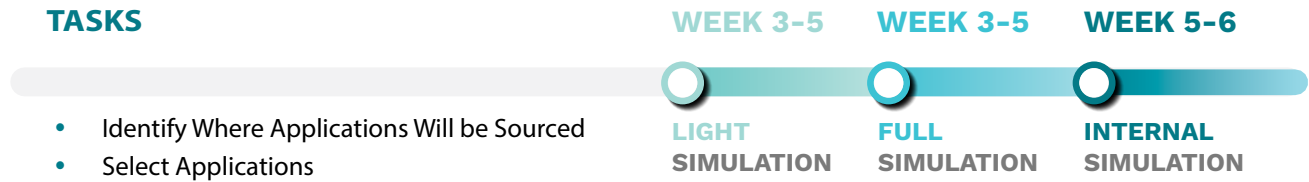
Sample Email: Promotional Materials for Simulation

You may also promote your simulation through other mediums, such as web and social media.



Sample Email: Call for Internal Applications

SELECT APPLICATIONS



Identify Where Applications Will Be Sourced

- For **Light and Full Simulations**, applications can be provided by the facilitator **OR** can be chosen from a list of mock applications provided in the resources below.
- For **Internal Simulations**, applications should have been solicited during the promotional period from upcoming Project Grant applicants within your institution – see [Promote Mock Review Simulation](#) section.



A list of mock applications is provided below under resources. Contact [College of Reviewers](#) for access to full mock applications. You will be required to sign a Confidentiality agreement prior to their release.

Select Applications

Select applications in consideration of the type and scope of the simulation.

- For the **Light Simulation**, it is suggested that 1-2 applications are assigned to each Reviewer.
- For the **Full and Internal Simulations**, it is suggested that each Reviewer is assigned 2-4 applications, with up to 3 Reviewers reviewing the same application.
- Note that these are suggestions. Please take into consideration the number of participants and their scope of expertise and modify the application pool, number of committees and their scope as necessary. Please see *Select a Simulation* section for more details.

Resources



Master Planner (Please contact the [College of Reviewers](#) for this resource)

This resource is also listed in the [Logistics Planning](#) section. It is indicated here again as it contains worksheets used to organize, track and assign applications.

Resources




List of Mock Applications

We have provided a list of anonymized Mock Applications for use in the Light and Full simulations. These represent previously funded applications from the Project and Open Grant competitions across all four Pillars of Research (Biomedical, Clinical, Health Systems and Services, and Social, Cultural, Environmental and Population Health) in both French and English.

Every application includes:

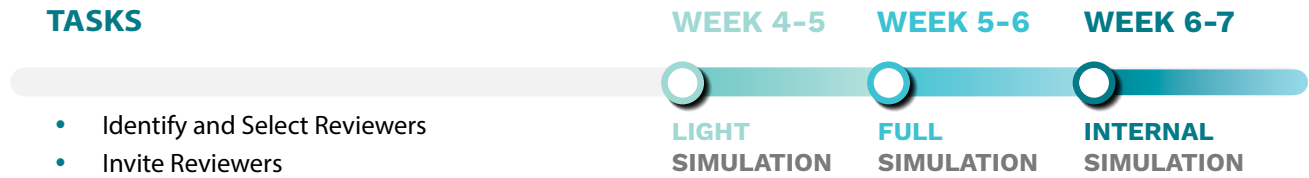
- the 10-12 page anonymized grant proposal and a section on sex and gender

Most applications include:

- [the Committee \(PRC\)](#)  to which it was originally assigned.
- the Official Reviews and SO Notes from the original assessment as an additional resource.

The PRC denotation is meant to help Facilitators better assign applications, as well as give participants a better perspective of how an application matches to a Project Committee Mandate. The Official Reviews and SO Notes can be used as additional educational tools to provide participants with real examples of these items in practice.

SELECT AND INVITE REVIEWERS



Select Reviewers

Identify and select Reviewers who have applied or registered for the simulation. Take into account any eligibility criteria and/or space limitations.

- Be sure all potential Reviewers have provided you with their expertise. This will be particularly helpful if you do not plan on having Reviewers complete an Ability to Review task – see [Assigning Applications](#) section for more details.

Invite Reviewers



MANDATORY: As part of the welcome email, include the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Peer Reviewers and Peer Review Observers form (found below) for Reviewers to complete.

- Send the welcome email to selected and/or registered Reviewers, which will include relevant information, such as the date, time, and location for the Committee meeting.
- For **Internal Simulations**, we recommend using this time to identify any possible conflicts between the Reviewers and the owners of the applications, both from the Reviewer and applicant’s perspectives.

Resources



Sample Email: Welcome to Reviewers

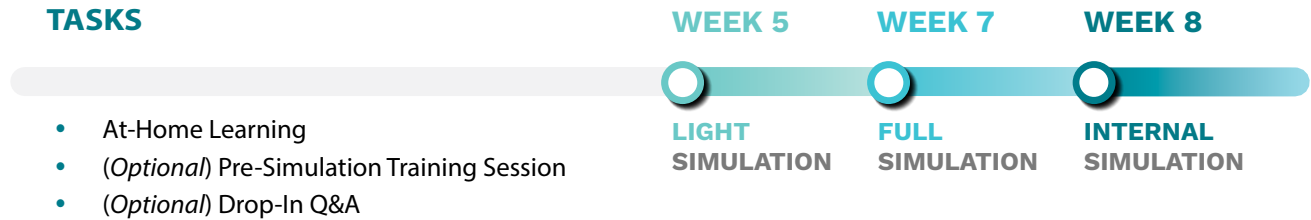
Includes important information on the Committee meeting



MANDATORY: Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Peer Reviewers and Peer Review Observers Form

Must be attached to the Welcome Email to Reviewers. Facilitators MUST NOT distribute any CIHR Mock Applications to a Reviewer until said Reviewer has completed and returned a signed copy of the agreement form.

PRE-SIMULATION TRAINING MATERIALS



At-Home Learning

The pre-simulation learning materials are designed to help prepare Reviewers for the mock review simulation and to provide information related to the peer review process at CIHR. The pre-simulation learning materials should be sent as a package shortly after Reviewers receive their [welcome email](#). As part of the [Pre-Simulation Training Package](#), Reviewers should receive clear instructions on learning expectations at-home, which include reading through the [Pre-Simulation Training Reading Materials](#) that must be attached to the package.

Reviewers are also expected to complete the learning modules listed in the link below and included in the package.

[Learning for Peer Reviewers](#)

Resources



Sample Email: Pre-Simulation Training Package

Informs participants to read the [Pre-Simulation Training Materials](#) section of the Toolkit and refers to additional learning modules for completion.



Pre-Simulation Training Reading Materials

Must be attached to the Pre-Simulation Training Package. Includes portion of the Toolkit Reviewers must read as learning expectations.

(Optional) Pre-Simulation Training Session

During the training session, Facilitators will guide Reviewers through the Pre-Simulation Training materials using the Participant Pre-Simulation Training Presentation that can be provided upon request. This training session can be offered virtually or in-person. We encourage Facilitators to include guest speakers with significant CIHR review experience, or expertise in a specific area, such as Sex and Gender Based Analysis (SGBA), to support the presentation.

Resources



Participant Pre-Simulation Training Presentation

(Please contact the [College of Reviewers](#) for this resource)

This presentation was built to help prepare Reviewers for reviewing applications at home and attending the mock Committee meeting.



Pre-Simulation Training Session Agenda Template

Attach as part of the Pre-Simulation Training Package, found under [At-Home Learning](#)", if an in-person training session is planned



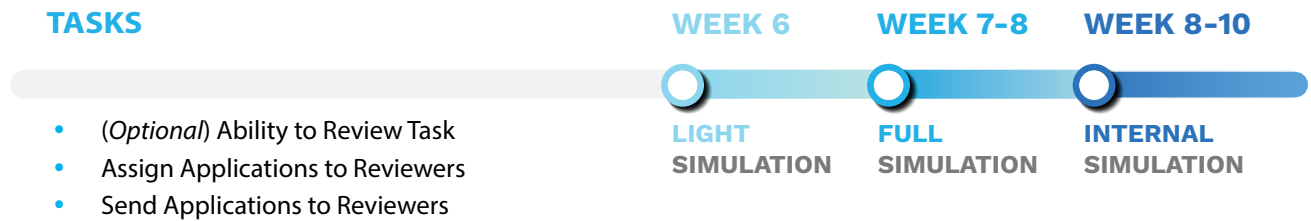
Note, a pre-recorded Pre-Simulation Training Session presented by the College of Reviewers is also available upon request.

(Optional) Drop-In Q&A

Facilitators can also offer to host brief half-hour drop-in sessions, either virtually or in-person, for participants to ask any questions that may arise once they begin reviewing applications. These sessions can occur any time between the Pre-Simulation Training and the Committee meeting.

RUNNING THE SIMULATION

ASSIGNING APPLICATIONS AND AT-HOME REVIEWS



After signing the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality agreement and receiving all Pre-Simulation Training materials, Reviewers are assigned applications for review. Reviewers can either be assigned a set of pre-selected applications **OR** applications that fit, as best as possible, the Themes or Areas of Science they indicated during the [promotion period](#) **OR** Reviewers may be provided with application summaries and asked to complete an Ability to Review task.

(Optional) Ability to Review Task

This **optional** Ability to Review task allows Reviewers to indicate the extent to which their expertise aligns with provided applications. Facilitators may decide to conduct the Ability to Review task to both better replicate CIHR's Peer Review process and/or to try and best match Reviewer expertise to an application.



It is important to note, even if the Ability to Review process is conducted, Reviewer expertise does not need to align perfectly as this is a training exercise. Remind participants that reviewers often underappreciate their Ability to Review when reading application summaries, and that they will likely have much more to contribute than they would initially believe.

Resources



Sample Email: Application Assignment

If the Ability to Review process is conducted, this email is sent to Reviewers and lists application summaries for Reviewers to indicate their expertise alignment



Ability to Review Template

Reviewers will complete the Ability to Review task using this template, which should be attached to the Application Assignment Email.

Assign Applications to Reviewers

We recommend each Reviewer in a **Light Simulation** be assigned 1-2 applications, while in the **Full or Internal Simulation** we recommend 2-4 applications per Reviewer.

The Facilitator will also have to balance the number of Reviewers assigned to each application. In a typical Project competition, **each application is assigned three Reviewers: a primary and to two secondary**. The primary Reviewer is the first to give their assessment at the Committee meeting, including a brief synopsis, while secondary Reviewers concentrate on points of agreement or disagreement.

While we recommend following the standard model (1 Primary and 2 Secondary Reviewers/application), we recognize that there will many instances where the size of the committee or the number of applications available necessitates that more than 3 Reviewers be assigned to an application. We encourage the Facilitator to adapt application assignments as necessary to fit their simulation – be it having more than three Reviewers per application, having multiple primary Reviewers, or even having Reviewers with specific tasks for a given application (e.g. providing a detailed perspective on the incorporation of Sex and Gender). For additional details on the roles played by primary and secondary Reviewers during Committee, please see the [Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts](#) section later in the Toolkit.



Use the Master Planner resource to help track and assign applications. Please contact the [College of Reviewers](#) for this resource.

Send Applications to Reviewers

Mock Review Templates must be provided to Reviewers along with their assigned applications. Reviewers will conduct their reviews at-home using the provided Mock Review Templates prior to the Committee meeting. The Mock Review Template allows Reviewers to; summarize the application, provide an overall score, note strengths and weaknesses, assess sex and gender considerations, and provide a budget recommendation.

Resources



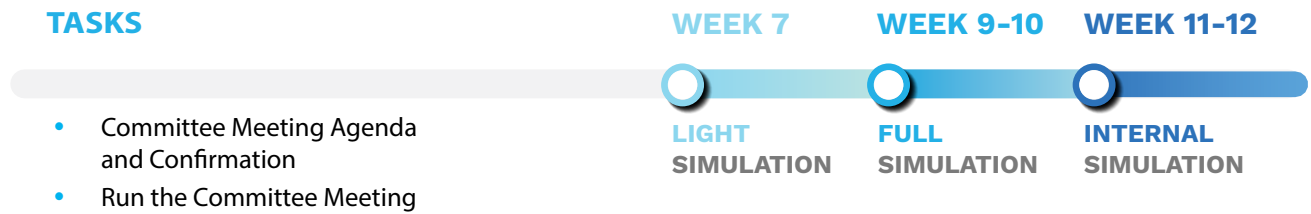
Sample Email: At-Home Reviews

Details instructions on completing at-home reviews using the Mock Review Template



Mock Review Template

COMMITTEE MEETING



Committee Meeting Agenda and Confirmation

An email should be sent out to participants in advance of the Committee meeting to confirm the meeting's date/time/location and provide a meeting agenda. Facilitators can adapt the sample email and agenda provided below to fit their specific timelines. If the meeting is virtual, we recommend Facilitators include items listed under [Preparation and Room Setup](#) below as part of their communication to participants.

Resources



Sample Email: Confirmation of Committee Meeting



Meeting Agenda Template

Must be attached to the Confirmation of Committee Meeting email. If the Committee meeting is in-person, this must also be printed for all participants – see [Preparation and Room Setup](#) below

Run the Committee Meeting

Preparation and Room Setup

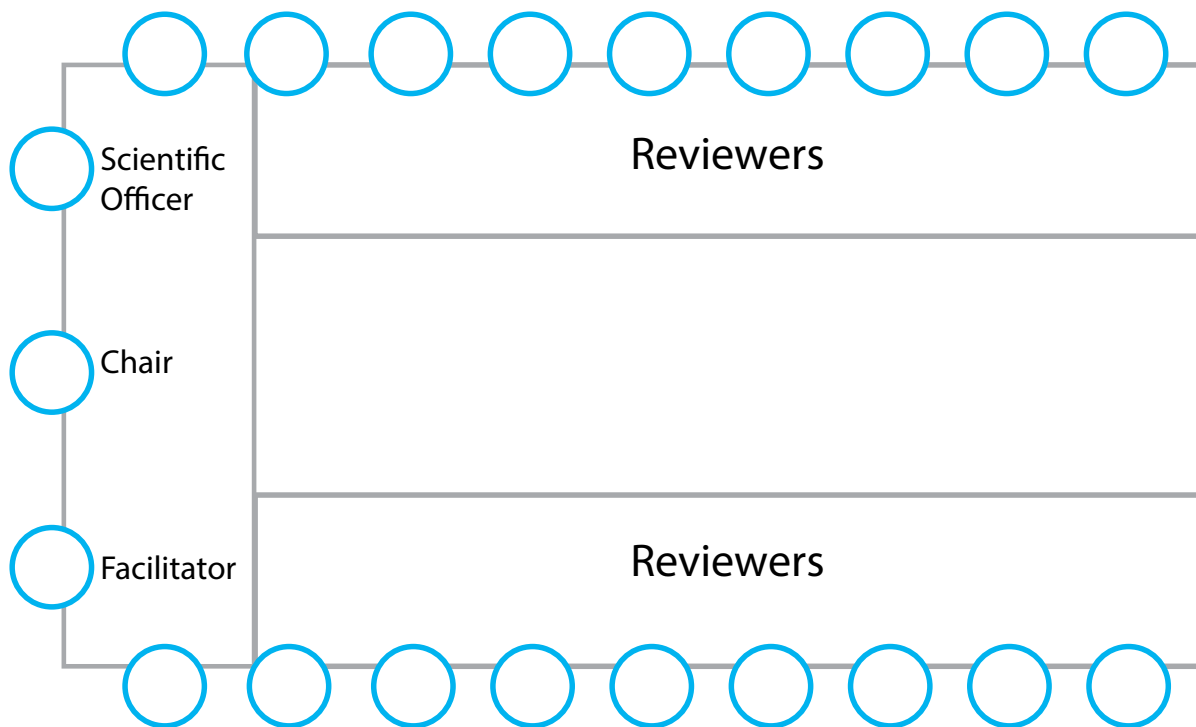


Note, these are suggestions for room setup; please adapt as necessary.

If the Committee meeting is in-person, these items should be printed ahead of the meeting. If the Committee meeting is virtual, these resources can be sent to participants prior to the virtual meeting as part of the [Confirmation of Committee Meeting](#) package above.

IN-MEETING RESOURCES		
NO.	DOCUMENT NAME	DESCRIPTION
1 per participant	Sequence of Steps for Committee Meeting 🔗	A step-by-step description of the Committee meeting. Useful for all participants.
1 per participant	ROA Checklist 🔗	A practical tool to assist Reviewers in writing quality reviews. Useful for entire committee.
1 per Facilitator	Scoring Sheet 🔗	A scoring sheet that allows for tracking of scores for Facilitators OR all participants.
1 per application	SO Notes Template 🔗	A template for Scientific Officers to write their notes.
1 per Chair and Scientific Officer	Executive Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts 🔗	Scripts to assist committee executives in their role.
1 per Reviewer	Reviewer Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts 🔗	Scripts to assist Reviewers in their role.

If the Committee meeting is to be in-person, we suggest the table be setup as depicted below to better facilitate discussion.



Sequence of Steps for Committee Meeting

STEPS FOR COMMITTEE MEETING

1. Overview of Process

- Facilitator(s) to provide an overview of the simulation, including the steps outlined below and a [refresher on quality reviews](#)
- **(For Light Simulation)** Participants break out into smaller Committees of 6-8 Reviewers with a Chair and one or more Scientific Officers for each.
- All participants engage in a round table introduction

2. Application Initial Ratings

- The Chair announces the application that is to be reviewed.
- The Chair announces Reviewers in conflict who then subsequently leave the room **(may not be applicable for all simulations)**.
- The Chair announces the Reviewers.
- The assigned Reviewers announce their initial rating. Facilitator(s) use the [Scoring Sheet](#) to keep track of the assigned Reviewers' initial ratings **OR** all participants are provided with a [Scoring Sheet](#) for tracking.

3. Reviewers present the application and their reviews

- The primary Reviewer (i.e., Reviewer # 1) provides a brief synopsis (~ 5 minutes) of the proposal and presents their assessment, describing strengths and weaknesses of the proposal, including comments on the integration of sex and/or gender in the research design, methods, analysis, and/or dissemination of findings, when appropriate.
- The secondary Reviewers (i.e., Reviewer # 2 and # 3) follow, concentrating on points of agreement or disagreement with the other Reviewers, and elaborating on points not already addressed.

4. Committee discussion

The Chair opens and moderates the committee discussion:

- Reviewers are encouraged to participate in the discussion.
- The discussion should focus on aspects of the application raised in the reviews, especially those aspects that are contributing to its rating.
- Differences of opinion between Reviewers should be discussed.
- If the assigned Reviewers have not commented on the sex and/or gender components of the application, the Chair will ask the Reviewers and other committee members to comment on the integration of SGBA into the proposal, if applicable. Those comments should be recorded in the Scientific Officer notes, using the [SO Notes Template](#), and should occur prior to the consensus score being discussed.

STEPS FOR COMMITTEE MEETING**5. Scientific Officer**

- Scientific Officer takes notes of the key elements of the discussion using the [SO Notes Template](#). The notes are read to the committee for validation/approval.

6. Consensus rating by reviewers

- The Chair asks the Reviewers assigned to the application to come to a consensus rating. Reviewers can refer to the [Rating Scale](#) to help guide their rating.
- If a consensus cannot be reached, the Chair will determine the consensus rating by averaging the ratings from the Reviewers after the discussion.
- Facilitator(s) use the [Scoring Sheet](#) to keep track of the assigned Reviewers' consensus rating **OR** all participants are provided with a Scoring Sheet for tracking.

7. Committee individual ratings

- All committee members are asked to rate the application, they are permitted to vote +/- 0.5 from the assigned Reviewers' consensus score.
- The Facilitator(s) use the [Scoring Sheet](#) to keep track of the Committee individual ratings **OR** all participants are provided with a Scoring Sheet for tracking.
- The Chair and Scientific Officers do not vote.

8. Matters to be flagged

- Ethics issues, eligibility, use of human stem cells, other concerns, research of general interest (especially the applications highly rated and ranked by the committee).

9. Scientific Officer

- Scientific Officer reads final notes, for validation/approval by the committee.

10. (Optional) Debrief

- Participants discuss lessons learned and ask questions of the more experienced reviewers (Chairs). All committees (if more than one) should reconvene for this discussion.

Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts

Facilitator

The Facilitator is responsible for organizing the Committee meeting(s) and ensuring that everyone has the appropriate documentation.

The Facilitator will:

- provide all necessary documentation
- discuss conflicts of interest
- clarify policies and/or administrative processes
- keep track of the time
- ensure Chair knows when it is time to take a break

Chair

It is the Chair's responsibility to ensure that the review committee functions smoothly, effectively and objectively, and that a positive, constructive, fair-minded environment in which research proposals are evaluated is established and maintained.

The Chair will:

- provide opening remarks to the committee, including an outline of the structure and agenda of the day.
- explain the meeting process to the committee, including the review of SGBA considerations in the applications.
- briefly discuss the budget and term components and remind Reviewers that they are not part of the Committee meeting.
- ensure that all committee members who are in conflict with an application leave the meeting room before the discussion of the application.
- appoint a delegate as Chair or Scientific Officer when either individual leaves the meeting room due to a conflict of interest with an application or for any other reasons.
- fulfill an oversight role – does not rate applications nor vote during the Committee meeting.
- ensure the involvement of the entire committee in evaluating each application.
- work with the Scientific Officers, as required, to summarize the discussion around each application, before the consensus rating is reached.
- ensure that a consensus rating is reached by the assigned Reviewers.
- ensure that specific ethical concerns and other CIHR requirements are addressed, and that any related discussion is captured in the Scientific Officer notes.

Scientific Officer




Reviewers can rotate the role of an SO to gain experience. If this is the case, ensure that all "SO Reviewers" receive a copy of the SO Note Template (available in Preparation and Room Setup above). You can also include a Mock SO Note (included with some, but not all Mock Applications) to provide Reviewers with an example.

The Scientific Officer (SO) assumes the role of note taker.

The SO will:

- take official notes of the committee discussions for each application (SO Notes). The SO Notes should provide the applicants with insight into the committee discussion of their applications. They should be clear and concise and give objective and constructive feedback to the applicants. They should:
 - > include the strengths and weaknesses of the applications discussed by the committee.
 - > address the issues that had the greatest impact on the evaluation, as they relate to the program's evaluation criteria.
 - > address aspects of the committee discussions that were not captured in the Reviewers' reports.
 - > describe how Reviewer disagreements, as seen in the individual Reviewer reports, were reconciled by identifying which view was favored by the committee.
- read back the SO Notes to the committee for validation and for additional input before a consensus rating on each application is reached by the assigned Reviewers, and all the members' votes are cast.
- ensure that special considerations related to ethics and/or other issues are also recorded in the SO Notes, if applicable.

Reviewers

The Reviewer evaluates each of the applications assigned to them by providing a critical assessment of the applications, as well as constructive feedback based on the program's objectives and adjudication criteria described in the [funding opportunity](#) .

The Reviewer will:

- consider all factors and the strengths and weaknesses of the applications in relation to each adjudication criterion.
- focus their comments on the factors most relevant to their ratings.
- provide comments on the integration of sex (as a biological variable) and/or gender (as a socio-cultural determinant of health) in the applications, if applicable.
- provide comments on the budgets requested and a formal recommendation to CIHR in the "Budget" section, including clear and detailed reasons for any recommended budget or term cuts, if applicable (**Note: discussion of budget and term support is not currently within scope of this Mock Review Toolkit*).
- provide comments on issues that they feel should be flagged, as required. These concerns should not influence the rating or budget recommendations, unless they bear on the scientific merit of the applications.
- provide their initial ratings to one decimal place using the provided Mock Review Templates
- familiarize themselves in advance of the Committee meeting with the applications to be assessed by their committee as this will facilitate discussions at the face-to-face Committee meeting.
- present to the committee the review of their assigned applications.
- participate in the committee discussions.
- vote on all the applications discussed by the committee and for which they are not in conflict with.

Reviewer Scripts

Primary Reviewer(s) Script

- Once Chair introduces Reviewers, present initial scores to committee.
- Present a brief overview of the application, premise of the research, study design etc.
- Discuss strengths and weaknesses.
- Listen to other reviews.
- Following Secondary Reviewer(s) discuss consensus score.
- Discuss further if necessary.
- Confirm content of notes from Scientific Officer at the end of the discussion.

Secondary Reviewer(s) Script

- Once Chair introduces Reviewers, present initial scores to committee.
- Listen to Primary Reviewer(s) overview of the application and comments.
- Present strengths and weaknesses not mentioned by previous Reviewers.
- Once all discussion has taken place, Reviewers discuss consensus score.
- Discuss further if necessary.
- Confirm content of notes from Scientific officer at the end of the discussion.

POST-SIMULATION

TASKS

- Debrief and Post-Simulation Survey
- Feedback to Project Grant applicants – Internal Simulations

WEEK 8

LIGHT
SIMULATION

WEEK 10-11

FULL
SIMULATION

WEEK 13-15

INTERNAL
SIMULATION

DEBRIEF AND POST-SIMULATION SURVEY

Following the simulation, a discussion about review quality should follow, using the Standards of Practice for Peer Review. CIHR bases its funding decisions on peer review, the internationally accepted standard for determining excellence in scientific research. The integrity of the peer review system relies on the ability of Reviewers to exercise fair and rigorous judgement. Reviewers demonstrate this judgement through written reports (or reviews), which normally consist of the rating and explanatory comments.

Reviewers are also encouraged to discuss and reflect on the overall experience and lessons learned. Please use the Review Quality Checklist provided in the pre-simulation training materials to help discuss or evaluate the quality of reviews and discussions that took place during the simulation.

In the weeks following the simulation, Reviewers should also be sent the Post-Simulation Survey to evaluate the utility and effectiveness of the simulation. The Post-Simulation Survey seeks to assess the effectiveness of the CIHR Mock Review Toolkit. Please note that the feedback provided should be anonymous and that the results of the survey should be amalgamated and shared with CIHR and the participants of the program.

Resources



Post-Simulation Survey


FEEDBACK TO PROJECT GRANT APPLICANTS – INTERNAL SIMULATIONS









Note, this step is only for Internal Simulations and should be conducted a minimum of 4 weeks prior to the actual Project Grant application submission deadline.

Facilitators should collect reviews and SO Notes from Reviewers/Executives to provide to Project Grant applicants. The Project Grant applicants can use this feedback to improve their proposals prior to submission.

LIST OF RESOURCES

RESOURCE	SECTION – SUBSECTION OF THE TOOLKIT
 <p>Master Planner (Please contact the College of Reviewers for this resource)</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Logistics Planning and Select Applications</p>
 <p>Sample Email: Invitation Committee Executives</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Invite Facilitator and Committee Executives</p>
 <p>Sample Email: Promotional Materials for Simulation</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Promote Mock Re-view Simulation</p>
 <p>Sample Email: Call for Internal Applications</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Promote Mock Review Simulation</p>
 <p>List of Mock Applications</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Select Applications</p>
 <p>Sample Email: Welcome to Reviewers</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Select and Invite Reviewers</p>
 <p>Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Agreement for Peer Reviewers and Peer Review Observers Form</p>	<p>Planning the Simulation – Select and Invite Reviewers</p>

RESOURCE	SECTION – SUBSECTION OF THE TOOLKIT
 Sample Email: Pre-Simulation Training Package	Planning the Simulation – Pre-Simulation Training Materials
 Pre-Simulation Training Reading Materials	Planning the Simulation – Pre-Simulation Training Materials
 Pre-Simulation Session Agenda Template	Planning the Simulation – Pre-Simulation Training Materials
 Participant Pre-Simulation Training Presentation (<i>Please contact the College of Reviewers for this resource</i>)	Planning the Simulation – Pre-Simulation Training Materials
 Sample Email: Application Assignment	Running the Simulation – Assigning Applications and At-Home Reviews
 Ability to Review Template	Running the Simulation – Assigning Applications and At-Home Reviews
 Sample Email: At-Home Reviews	Running the Simulation – Assigning Applications and At-Home Reviews
 Mock Review Template	Running the Simulation – Assigning Applications and At-Home Reviews
 Sample Email: Confirmation of Committee Meeting	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Meeting Agenda Template	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Sequence of Steps for Committee Meeting	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting

RESOURCE	SECTION – SUBSECTION OF THE TOOLKIT
 RQA Checklist	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Scoring Sheet	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 SO Notes	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Executive Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Reviewer Roles, Responsibilities and Scripts	Running the Simulation – Committee Meeting
 Post-Simulation Survey	Post-Simulation

For more information about

Project Grant Competition Mock Review Toolkit, College of Reviewers,
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The Mock Review Toolkit is designed to simulate the Project Grant competition review process. The material in this document does not replace existing material online. The applications provided within the Toolkit are for information and learning purposes only, and serve as examples of what an application could contain.

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For more information or to obtain copies, please contact college@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.