CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS
CONSIDERATIONS ON SERVICE AS A CONSUMER REVIEWER

THIS DOCUMENT PROVIDES AN OVERVIEW OF THE PEER REVIEW PROCESS AND OUTLINES THE COMMITMENTS AND THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR A CONSUMER REVIEWER.

OVERVIEW

The office of the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP) is funded through the Department of Defense (DOD) via annual congressional legislation known as the Department of Defense Appropriations Act. Each year, this funding is targeted for specific biomedical research programs. The CDMRP solicits applications from scientists worldwide with the overall goal of funding high-impact, high-risk, and high-gain projects that other agencies may not venture to fund. These efforts may focus on such areas as basic science, treatment and intervention, prevention, detection and diagnosis, epidemiological studies, families and caregivers, and neurobiology/genetics.

To ensure scientific excellence and programmatic relevance, the CDMRP administers a 2-tier review process consisting of peer review and programmatic review. Peer and programmatic review panels are composed of scientists, clinicians, consumers from advocacy communities, service members and veterans, and other specialists applicable to the award mechanism and program area. Consumers serve as full voting members and play a significant role in maintaining the focus of the respective program on research that is relevant and has the potential to make a substantial impact on the community affected.

Peer review is the first tier of the review process. It is a criterion-based process in which reviewers evaluate applications based on their individual scientific and technical merits in a given discipline or combination of disciplines.

General Dynamics Information Technology (GDIT) provides contracted support to the CDMRP peer review process. Individuals nominated to serve as consumer reviewers for GDIT will be serving at the peer review level of the review process. If selected as a consumer reviewer, an individual will be a consultant to GDIT and receive guidance and instructions from GDIT.

Programmatic review is the second tier of the review process. Applications of high scientific and technical merit compete in a comparison-based process. Programmatic review occurs after peer review and relies upon the peer review meeting results to make final funding recommendations to CDMRP. An application must be favorably reviewed by both tiers of the 2-tier review system in order to be funded. Another DOD contractor supports the programmatic review process.

CONSUMER REVIEWER ROLE

Consumer reviewers may be patients, survivors, family members, caregivers, or providers of health care services. They have lived experience with certain topics, conditions, or diseases and exhibit accomplishments and commitment to education, treatment, and/or patient advocacy. Consumers must represent <u>all</u> patients and survivors in their disease/condition community by evaluating the "impact" the application might have on the population. Consumer comments made in the peer review process help broaden the discussions by including issues such as the quality of life for those living with the condition, psychosocial needs, and/or ethical issues.

NOMINATION TIMELINE, SELECTION, AND ESTIMATED WORKLOAD

When a completed packet is submitted by a nominee, a consumer reviewer administrator (CRA) will conduct an interview. Once accepted by the program CRA, approved individuals will join our pool of eligible consumer reviewers. The program CRA will be in touch regarding peer review dates and reviewer availability for upcoming peer review meetings. The number of consumers assigned each year is dependent upon the number of applications received. Due to this fact, we are often unable to assign all eligible consumers in the year that they

were approved. These individuals will remain active in our eligible pool of consumer reviewers and considered for upcoming panels.

There are mandatory tasks, such as registration, that require completion within 48 business hours of assignment to a panel. Assigned reviewers will receive their application assignments approximately 4-6 weeks before the peer review meeting.

Serving on a peer review panel is an approximately 6-week commitment. By accepting assignment to a panel, the consumer reviewer will agree to attend either a virtual or in-person meeting and will acknowledge that they will spend an estimated 40 hours in preparation (training, reading, and critique writing) for the peer review meeting.

Reviewers should have the ability to work independently to meet deadlines, be comfortable reading a large volume of material in a short, defined period, be capable of providing written and verbal analysis, and be receptive to feedback from the panel's scientific review officer (SRO). Reviewers assigned to panels will be required to utilize a laptop or desktop computer to complete their work prior to and during the peer review meeting. Mobile phones and/or tablets are not recommended for use. Handheld devices *may* be used for audio/visual accommodations during the meeting.

PEER REVIEW PANEL

A scientific peer review panel carries out the application review. A panel comprises scientists and consumers. Scientist reviewers must develop detailed written comments on the scientific content, feasibility, design, budget, personnel, and impact. Consumer reviewers focus their written reviews on the significance of the proposed work as it relates to improved medical care, enhanced quality of life, and the potential of the work to make an impact for those with the condition/disease. Virtual and in-person peer review meetings take place so reviewers can discuss each application, share their comments, and provide overall scores. Both scientists and consumer reviewers are required to:

- Evaluate *assigned* applications and provide written critiques of each assigned application in advance of the meeting.
- Attend the peer review meeting, which can be an in-person, virtual, or moderated-online meeting (for virtual meetings, reviewers are expected to be available for the entire meeting, which can be between 4 and 8 hours).
- Discuss and numerically score the quality of *each* of the submitted applications in the peer review meeting.

TRAINING

All selected individuals are required to participate in training to help prepare them for the consumer reviewer role. GDIT will provide recorded and live webinars along with printed training materials. Consumers will be provided dates for live training events in advance. In addition to formal trainings, consumers spend a considerable amount of time independently researching and reading resource material in preparation for their contribution to the peer review meeting.

MENTORS

Every effort will be made to assign a "mentor" to consumer reviewers who have never participated in a CDMRP scientific peer review meeting. Mentors are experienced consumer reviewers who agree to provide guidance, insight, and support to new consumers throughout the peer review process.

CONSUMER REVIEWERS' CORE RESPONSIBILITIES

If assigned to a peer review panel, consumer reviewers are responsible for the following:

- Being open and honest about their health status and their ability to complete the sometimes rigorous workload.
- Meeting strict deadlines throughout the process and being responsive to all emails from GDIT staff.
- Reading and writing critiques for up to 20 applications (workload varies by program).
- Completing all live and/or recorded webinars/training sessions.
- Utilizing GDIT's proprietary web-based Program and Peer Review Management Information System (P^2RMIS) for all peer review-related work; this requires proficiency in computer/browser/internet basics.
- Orally delivering the consumer perspective during the panel discussions and summarizing written critiques for the entire panel.
- Participating in a collective review and discussion of each application and remaining open to the opinions of other reviewers.
- Evaluating the potential impact and overall merit of each application based upon premeeting research, panel discussions, and lived experience.

Noncompliance with any of the above responsibilities may risk the removal of a reviewer from the panel due, in part, to the strict timelines required for the peer review process. Noncompliance may affect consideration for assignment to future panels. Consumer reviewers must always contact their CRA as soon as possible about issues that limit their participation or ability to meet the required deadlines.

MEETING LOGISTICS

Peer review panel meetings allow for formal deliberations of the applications, at which time scientists and consumers present their comments during the discussion. Panel meetings may take place virtually or in-person. In-person meetings are held in the greater Washington, DC or Baltimore metro areas. In-person meetings may be 1 to 3 days in length, and virtual meetings may be 1 to 2 days, depending upon the format and number of applications reviewed.

CONSULTANT FEE

GDIT understands that reviewers' time is valuable. Participants will receive a modest consultant fee paid by GDIT that serves as a *thank you* for participating in advancing medical research. This fee does not compensate reviewers for the hourly time spent reading and preparing for the peer review meeting. If selected for an in-person meeting, reviewers will receive reimbursement for expenses associated with attending the meeting, such as taxi or parking fees. Hotel, travel, and meal expenses will be arranged/provided/reimbursed as appropriate by GDIT.

CDMRP WEBSITE

We recommend that you visit the consumer pages on the CDMRP website to read inspiring consumer accounts of their participation experience and to learn more about CDMRP: https://cdmrp.army.mil/cwg/stories/default.