

Procedure for Merit Review of ISRC and TLT Proposals
Office of Academic Affairs
New York Institute of Technology

Rev. 12/12/2019

Please note that by agreeing to serve on the ISRC-TLT Review Committee, members consent to sign a confidentiality agreement (Exhibit A) under which they agree to keep:

- **All proposals confidential**
- **All proposal reviews and deliberations/discussions confidential**
- **All proposal scores confidential**
- **All ideas and potential intellectual property contained in these proposals confidential**

Proposals received by NYIT's Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPAR) are checked by OSPAR staff for completeness and conformance with ISRC and TLT Program guidelines, and the budgets are checked for accuracy. All proposals deemed ready for review are then routed to members of the ISRC-TLT Review Committee for peer review. Committee recommendations are made to the Provost by the Chair, and the Provost makes final funding decisions.

Funding Priorities

Preference for ISRC-TLT funding is given to **proposals that are likely to attract external grants and/or result in some sort of permanent advancement of the field** (e.g. an art show, or a best-selling book), and to **proposals that involve graduate and undergraduate students in the faculty member's scholarly/creative activities.**

Review Process

Every effort is made to conduct an impartial, competitive, and transparent merit-review process. All ISRC-TLT proposals are evaluated through the use of specified merit review criteria. Each criterion includes suggested considerations that help to define it. While not all of these considerations will apply to any given proposal, reviewers are asked to address those considerations that are relevant to the proposal at hand and for which the reviewer is qualified to make judgments. Reviewers unqualified to review a particular application, due to a conflict of interest, are required to recuse themselves from deliberating, scoring, and voting upon that proposal. Review Committee members are appointed by the Provost, both for their specialized knowledge of their respective fields, and for their general knowledge, including their familiarity with the different scholarly, creative, and pedagogical approaches that are practiced at NYIT, and knowledge of the grants arena. While committee selection is designed to ensure that all applications receive conscientious review by experts who can make recommendations in accordance with specified review criteria, it is recognized that non-specialist reviewers can provide vital perspectives on proposals outside their particular fields. Therefore, absent any conflict, Review Committee members are expected to evaluate, and vote on, most proposals.

Each Review Committee member is expected to review all proposals received (a total of 49 proposals were received for the 2020 round) in advance of the Review Committee meeting, and to serve as a Designated Reviewer on a subset of these (8 to 9 proposals per reviewer for the 2020 round). Before the review meeting, Review Committee members will be provided with copies in PDF of all proposals received, as well as Review Forms for that subset of proposals to which they have been assigned. (Review Forms will be provided as separate tabs in one Excel file, or Scoring Workbook. A sample Review Form is attached (as **Exhibit B**). Reviewers are responsible for completing all **yellow-highlighted** fields.) The Designated Reviewers are expected to (a) read all (49) applications; (b) assign a score to each criterion listed on the Review Form for those (8 to 9) proposals for which they are the Designated Reviewer; (c) provide substantive comments, on the Review Form, summarizing the factors that informed their scoring; and (d) e-mail the completed Scoring Workbook to grants@nyit.edu by a specified deadline. For the current round, completed Scoring Workbooks must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on **Tuesday, January 21, 2020**.

At the Review Committee meeting, which will be held on **Tuesday, January 28th** and which will be tape-recorded, the two Designated Reviewers assigned to each application will be asked to present or co-present each application in turn (3 to 5 minutes per application), and the Chair will invite comments from each fellow committee member in turn; discussion by all committee members is expected. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Chair will either table the application for later consideration, or call for a vote. Voting will be by ballot, and will include a vote by the Chair. The OSPAR Representative will tabulate the votes. The voting records will be shared with the Provost and the Chair, but otherwise will be kept confidential. Both the votes and the criterion scores will be considered by the Provost for a final determination.

Committee members are expected to remain present at the review meeting until deliberations and voting have been completed. If more time is required, additional review meetings will be convened.

After the Review Meeting, one Designated Reviewer will prepare a Summary Statement for each application (8 or 9 Summary Statements per reviewer in the 2020 round), consisting of the reviewers' comments and an overall written assessment for each application. (A draft Summary Statement will be provided by OSPAR after the meeting, with comments taken from the review workbooks and meeting minutes, with reviewers' names redacted.) All Summary Statements will be completed and submitted via e-mail to grants@nyit.edu (for the current round by **Tuesday, February 4th**).

Summary Statements will be reviewed and checked by OSPAR and the Chair, who will transmit these to the Provost with the Review Committee's recommendations and the final budgets prepared by OSPAR. The Provost will then make funding decisions; OSPAR will prepare award and declination letters to all applicants; and a decision letter, budget, and Summary Statement (with reviewers' names redacted) will be e-mailed to each PI and Co-PI.

Scoring Methodology

Before the Review Committee meeting, the Designated Reviewers will read their assigned applications, prepare brief but substantive written comments, and assign a score to each criterion listed on the Review Form for that proposal. **Criterion Scoring** will be based on a 5-point scale: **5 = Excellent; 4 = Very Good; 3 = Good; 2 = Fair; 1 = Poor**. Ratings will be in whole numbers; decimals will not be used, except in calculating means. A score of 5 indicates an exceptionally strong application, while a score of 1 denotes an application with serious weaknesses and few areas of strength. It is expected that scores of 1 and 5 will be used less frequently than other scores.

| Priority | Score | Descriptor | Additional Guidance on Strengths/Weaknesses |
|----------|-------|------------|---|
| Low | 1 | Poor | Few strengths and a few or numerous major weaknesses |
| | 2 | Fair | Some strengths but at least one major weakness |
| Medium | 3 | Good | Strong but with at least one moderate weakness |
| | 4 | Very Good | Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses |
| High | 5 | Excellent | Very strong with only minor, negligible, or essentially no weaknesses |

Reviewers will consider the five merit review criteria listed below. An application need not be strong in all categories in order to be judged meritorious/fundable. Providing scores without providing comments in the review critique is discouraged. The Criterion Scores will be adjusted automatically by the Excel workbook according to the percentages shown below to derive a **Weighted Mean Criterion Score**. The Weighted Mean Criterion Score for each application will be automatically multiplied by 20 to obtain the **Priority Score**. Priority Scores will range from 20-100.

OSPAR will aggregate the results and provide the Review Committee with a mean preliminary Priority Score, calculated to one decimal place, for each application at the time of the review meeting. These preliminary scores are not retained, but are ultimately replaced by final scores based on the outcome of the deliberations and emendations (if any) provided by reviewers at the review meeting. An application with a mean preliminary Priority Score in the 20-40 range will be triaged-out and will not receive further consideration at the meeting, unless a reviewer requests this of the Chair. In that event, the proposal at issue will be included in the ensuing discussion and evaluation of applications. Thus, the review meeting will, by and large, be reserved for applications in the Good to Excellent range.

Significance/Intellectual Merit (35%). *To what extent are the concepts presented in the proposal innovative, original, or potentially transformative? Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the proposal are achieved, how will knowledge and understanding be advanced? How important is the proposed project to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? How well qualified are the proposer(s) and other project personnel to conduct the activity? How well conceived and organized is the methodology?*

Broader Impacts (25%). *How wide an impact will the project have? To what extent does it advance knowledge and understanding while promoting teaching and learning? What is the degree of involvement of graduate and undergraduate students? How well does the activity broaden the participation of underrepresented (gender, ethnic, disabled, geographic, etc.) groups? To what extent will it enhance infrastructure for research and education (facilities, instrumentation, networks, partnerships, etc.)? Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance understanding? What benefits will accrue to society?*

Potential for Attracting External Funding and/or Significant Outreach for NYIT (15%). *Does the proposal include a concrete plan, including a timeline, for developing specified applications for outside grants or contract funding? If so, does the project have the potential to attract external funding or, in the case of a project in the Liberal Arts, the potential to enhance NYIT's outreach and reputation? What outreach activities, if any, are planned?*

Involvement of Students, Multiple Investigators, Multiple Disciplines, and Multiple Institutions (15%). *Of what benefit is the project to NYIT students? Are NYIT graduate students and/or undergraduate students included as project personnel? If not, has a rationale been provided for the lack of involvement of NYIT students? How will the project enhance NYIT's reputation? If the project is collaborative or multi-PI, do the investigators have complementary and integrated expertise, and have adequate provisions been made for project governance, organizational structure, and protection of intellectual property? If the project is multi-year, are the specific aims and project budget broken down by year?*

Environment (10%). *Are the available institutional support, equipment, and other resources adequate for the proposed project? Will the project benefit from unique features of the institutional environment, subject populations, or collaborative arrangements? Will these contribute to the probability of success?*

Additional Review Criteria. *Reviewers will consider whether the budget and the requested period of support are adequately justified and reasonable in relation to the proposed project. However, the reviewers will disregard the budget during merit review, and budgetary considerations will only enter into the final determinations. Reviewers will also ascertain whether proposals for research involving human subjects or vertebrate animals contain adequate justification for involvement of humans or animals as well as appropriate protections for human and animal subjects, including provision for Institutional Review Board or Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee review. IRB or IACUC approval is not required at the time of application; however, the PI must submit such approval to OSPAR before grant funds are disbursed.*

Appeals of Initial Review

Proposals are privileged communications that cannot be shown to or discussed with unauthorized individuals. Reviewers will respect the privacy of the investigators' ideas and intellectual property. Any PI who believes that the review of his/her application was procedurally flawed, and who wishes to contest his/her score and/or funding decision, may do so by writing a letter of appeal to the Provost within 30 days of the date of issuance of the summary statement. The appeal letter should (a) describe the flaws in the review process for the application in question, (b) explain the reasons for the appeal, and (c) present evidence for either (i) bias on the part of one or more peer reviewers, (ii) conflict of interest, (iii) lack of appropriate expertise within the Review Committee, and (iv) factual errors on the part of one or more reviewers, that could have altered the outcome of review. The Provost will consult with the Review Committee Chair and with other parties as needed, and will make a final determination.

Exhibit A

ISRC/TLT Grant Proposal Review *Application Reviewer Work and Confidentiality Agreement*

The undersigned reviewer agrees to adhere to the following scope of work, confidentiality, and conflict of interest requirements in connection with ISRC/TLT Grant Proposal Review managed by the Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPAR) of the New York Institute of Technology.

I. Scope of Work

- a) Before reviewing or scoring any grant application, carefully read the evaluation criteria, the explanations thereof and the instructions for scoring, all of which will be provided along with a PDF copy of the proposal;
- b) Carefully review the whole of each grant application transmitted pursuant to this agreement;
- c) In accordance with the priorities, criteria, explanations and instructions, solely on the basis thereof and of the content of the grant application, score each grant application for which you are a designated reviewer on each criterion, based on the degree to which the grant application meets the criterion;
- d) Correctly indicate the score awarded on each criterion in the place provided on the scoring sheet for the grant application; provide substantive comments to support such scores; and return the review workbook containing the scoring sheets to the OSPAR Representative in a timely manner.

II. Confidentiality

OSPAR requires each reviewer to treat applications with strict confidence before, during, and after the review process. Except for panel discussions, reviewers are not to discuss information contained in the applications or learned during panel meetings with anyone not included in the immediate panel. Reviewers are allowed to reproduce grant materials for the purpose of the application review. I understand and agree the maintenance of confidentiality also includes the destruction of confidential review materials at the conclusion of the review session. This includes any printed copies of the applications, notes from the application review and all other confidential information in my possession. I also acknowledge that OSPAR will not cover or provide reimbursement for printing and disposal expenses incurred by the Reviewer.

III. Conflict of Interest

Conflict of interest is defined as any action by a reviewer in the grants review or awarding process which would affect, or could appear to affect, the reviewer's financial interest; or would cause the reviewer's impartiality in the grants process to be questioned. Based on the information provided to me, I do not have a conflict of interest in any of the proposals. If during the review there is an appearance of or actual conflict of interest, I will recuse myself from the review of that application.

Panel Member:

Signature:

Date:

Please Print Name:

