Guidelines for reviewer’s comments on VMES grant proposals

Please use the following guidelines to prepare written comments on research proposals assigned to you. Remember to justify your comments and give specific examples to support them. Use of these guidelines should assure attention to all aspects essential for careful substantiation of the recommendations made by the Research Committee. Expectations regarding proposal quality should be comparable to that for an extramural proposal.

Description: Prepare a concise description of the proposal including aims and procedures.

Scientific merit: Comment on the scientific merit of the proposal including both strengths and weaknesses. Attention should be given to appropriateness of methods, significance of conclusions, and likelihood of success. Try to answer the following questions: Is the hypothesis clearly stated? Are the experiments designed to test the hypothesis? Is the approach valid and adequate? What is the significance and pertinence of the proposed study with regard to the state of the field? Does the research fit into the long-range goals of the lab?

Relevance: Comment on the relevance of the proposal in light of the VMES mission statement and comment on the impact that the expected findings would have on animal health.

Investigators and facilities: Comment on the qualifications of the investigators. Do the investigators appear to be developing a research program that will have sufficient merit to attract extramural support? Comment on the appropriateness of available facilities. Comments on the availability of resources such as special animal species, tissue preparations, and clinical case material should be included when appropriate.

Budget: Comment on the appropriateness of the budget. Is the budget realistic in terms of aims and methodology? Are all items justified on the basis of the approach, procedures, and analysis of the data proposed? Provide specific reasons for any reductions you suggest.

Use of animals: Comment on any concerns you may have with regard to the way in which animals will be used in the proposed research. Considerations of humane animal use are of utmost importance. All projects are subject to IACUC and/or Hospital Board approval.

Hazardous procedures: When a proposal involves potentially hazardous materials, comment on potential or actual problems and whether or not the investigator has adequately addressed precautions in dealing with these problems.

Recommendation: Make a recommendation as to whether the proposal should or should not be funded. At the review meeting, you will summarize your critique and, after discussion by the committee, a vote will be taken as to whether or not the proposal should be funded. If the proposal is determined to merit funding, the proposal will then be scored by each committee member from 0 (lowest priority for funding) to 5 (highest priority for funding). Proposals will be ranked by average score.

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