

ASTS Research Grant Application Review Criteria

Submitted by Ginny L. Bumgardner MD PhD on behalf of the Awards Committee

- a. Individual Scores for Significance, Approach, Innovation, Investigator, Environment, and Impact Score (not average of the individual scores)
- b. Strengths & Weaknesses identified in the comments section
- c. To avoid Conflict of Interest:
Application review assignments are made by the Chair of the Awards Committee with input from the Co-Chair and other committee members. The chair avoids assignments of applications to reviewers who are from the same institution as that of the applicant. Assignments are reviewed and reviewers are asked to recuse themselves by 1 week of assignment to allow time for reassignment of application (self-determined and to exclude review of applications from the same institution or colleague at same institution within the last 4 years). All reviewers who accept their assignments electronically sign that they do not have a conflict of interest for review of their assigned applications.
- i. Conflict of Interest Guidance: The ASTS will rely on the integrity of its members to determine whether or not there is a real or perceived conflict of interest when invited to review award applications. For reference, excerpts from the NIH instruction to reviewers regarding Conflict of Interest (COI) is provided. “An individual must leave the room when an application submitted by his/her own organization is being discussed or when the reviewer, his/her immediate family or close professional associate(s) has a financial or vested interest even if no significant involvement is apparent in the application being considered” Other conditions to avoid COI: if the reviewer is a provider of services, reagents or other materials, or writer of letter of reference for an application, and any actions which “give the appearance that a conflict of interest exists even though he/she believes there may not be an actual COI. Thus for example a member should participate in the deliberations and actions on any application from a recent student, a recent teacher or a close personal friend. Judgment must be applied on the basis of recency, frequency and strength of the working relationship between the reviewer and the applicant as reflected in publications etc. Another example might be an application from a scientist with whom the member has had longstanding differences that could reasonably be viewed as affecting the reviewer’s objectivity. Another example is the review of a project that closely duplicates work ongoing in the reviewer’s laboratory.”
- ii. If reviewers recuse themselves due to conflict of interest and additional reviewers are needed, request for additional reviewers will occur in advance of the review due date to ensure that all applications have a minimum of 5 reviewers, that the applications are reviewed in advance of the final score calculation and that additional reviewers review all applications in the relevant category in addition to the application(s) with reassigned reviewers.
- d. Minimum of 5 reviewers per category to ensure fair and unbiased review

- e. Committee to hold conference call before rankings submitted to discuss controversial or close ranks, finalize rank summary which is sent to Chair of the Awards Committee for review.
- f. Final Rank Summary submitted to ASTS Executive Council for review and approval