

## 2019 NDF Grant Scoring Guidelines

Thank you for volunteering your time and expertise to help MDA select the most worthy research proposals for funding. Everybody knows how valuable your time is and your effort is highly appreciated. Below you will find some guidelines on how to prepare your critiques. These guidelines were drafted based on templates used by the NIH and other private foundations in the neuromuscular field and, although they have been used widely by other Reviewers, there is still plenty of room for improvement. So, feel free to make recommendations that can help the NDF operate smoothly when evaluating and processing the applications submitted for consideration for funding.

Each grant should be scored using an NIH style scoring system 1-9. The goal is to spread out the score as much as possible so that NDF can evaluate and prioritize each grant based on significance, relevance to the NDF mission, project strength and project weaknesses. While we are planning to provide applicant with the critiques, we also want to have specific information that the reviewer feels should be important and that will only be seen internally by the other Reviewers, the NDF staff and the Board of Directors. Confidential information can help the Board of Directors when making a final decision on whether to fund or not the project. Please note that members of the NDF community may also see these comments and that not everybody is familiar with specific scientific terms. So please, use a lay language understandable to an average 8<sup>th</sup> grade person.

Reviewers should feel free to assign the score that they believe best represents the impact of the application, and not feel constrained to limit their scores to the upper half of the score range if they do not feel such a score is warranted.

Reviewers should consider not only the relative number of strengths and weaknesses noted, but also the importance of these strengths and weaknesses to the criteria or to the overall impact when determining a score. For example, a major strength may outweigh many minor and correctable weaknesses.

Reviewers should consider the full range of the rating scale and the scoring descriptors in assigning preliminary and final scores. However, a reviewer should not assume that the applications assigned to him/her necessarily cover that entire range of scores, and should assign scores as appropriate for the work or science proposed.

An application does not need to be strong in all categories to be judged likely to have major impact. For example, a project that by its nature is not innovative may be essential to advance a field.

## Overall Impact or Criterion Strength Score Descriptor

<b>High</b>	<b>1 Exceptional:</b> Not a single flaw or shortcoming
	<b>2 Outstanding:</b> Essentially no shortcomings; among the very best applications I've ever reviewed; highly relevant and timely to NDF's research mission
	<b>3 Excellent:</b> Minor weakness: easily addressable weakness, does not substantially lessen impact
<b>Medium</b>	<b>4 Very Good:</b> Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses. Not more than one major (but not insurmountable) flaw; few shortcomings; highly relevant to NDF's research mission.
	<b>5 Good:</b> Strong but with at least one moderate weakness; some flaws or shortcomings that could be easily corrected through constructive written critiques. Relevance to NDF's research mission may be debatable. Resubmission of a strengthened application (if permitted) is encouraged.
	<b>6 Satisfactory:</b> Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses. May have one or two major flaws and several minor flaws, which may be correctable through constructive written critiques. Relevance to NDF's research mission is questionable.
<b>Low</b>	<b>7 Fair:</b> Some strengths but with at least one major weakness. May not be relevant to NDF's research mission. Resubmission may or may not be recommended.
	<b>8 Marginal:</b> A few strengths and a few major weaknesses. The proposal falls far short of scientific merit due to numerous major and minor flaws or other deficiencies, and/or dubious relevance to NDF's research mission. Resubmission is not recommended.
	<b>9 Poor:</b> Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses. Serious deficiencies in the proposal, such as missing or improperly prepared sections, misleading information, withheld critical data, or other serious shortcomings that preclude adequate evaluation. Resubmission is not recommended.

**CONFIDENTIAL COMMENTS TO STAFF**

**Significance Score:**

**Scientific Merit Score:**

**Applicant Score:**

**Relevance to NDF Mission Score:**

**Overall Score:**

**COMMENTS TO APPLICANT**

- I. Project Summary**
- II. Project Strengths**
- III. Project Weaknesses**
- IV. Overall evaluation**