



5 reasons to submit a **COVER LETTER** with your **NIH GRANT APPLICATION**

<https://loop.nigms.nih.gov/category/peer-review/>

1. Suggest a particular review group for your application.

The NIH Center for Scientific Review (CSR) assigns applications to scientific review groups (SRGs), but sometimes an application could be a scientific match for more than one study section. In a cover letter, you can request assignment to a particular study section and explain why you think that study section would be the best fit. Appropriate assignment requests are honored in the majority of cases. [Study section descriptions](#), [recent study section rosters](#) and [the NIH RePORTER database of funded grants](#) can help you identify an SRG suitable for your application.

2. Suggest a particular institute or center (IC) for funding your research.

Your research might be relevant to the mission of more than one NIH IC. You can use a cover letter to suggest that your application be assigned to a specific IC. [The NIH RePORTER database](#) is a good place to investigate the types of research supported by different ICs. Before making a request in a cover letter, you should also consult with program officers at the IC to determine whether your application would be an appropriate scientific match.

3. List the areas of expertise needed to evaluate your application.

It helps the SRG's scientific review officer (SRO) assign appropriate reviewers to your application if you describe the scientific expertise needed to properly evaluate it. It's important, however, that you don't identify potential reviewers. The very fact that you recommend someone raises a concern about possible bias and usually puts that person in conflict with your application.

4. Identify potential reviewers who may be in conflict with your application.

If there is someone you feel may provide a biased evaluation of your application, let the SRO know by putting that information in a cover letter. You must explain the conflict; an example would be a longstanding scientific disagreement with an individual. Usually, there's no conflict when someone works in a very similar area, holds a different scientific opinion or has been on the review panel for a previous application that didn't do well. The SRO can use his/her judgment in deciding whether your explanation justifies placing that person in conflict with your application.

5. Include required information.

You need to provide a cover letter when you [submit your application late](#) or plan to [send video files](#). Some applications, such as those for conference grants, require pre-approval for submission, so the submitted application must include a cover letter with a copy of the approval letter. For a more comprehensive list of situations that [require](#) a cover letter, visit the [Create a Cover Letter webpage from NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases](#).

Who sees these cover letters? Only NIH staff with responsibilities relevant to application receipt, referral and review can see the cover letters; the letters are not shared with other NIH staff or reviewers.

These are some of the major, but not the only, reasons you might want to include a cover letter with your NIH application. For more information on why and how to write a cover letter, see the [Cover Letters Help Us Refer and Review Your Application webpage from CSR](#). Instructions for submitting a cover letter as an attachment to your application are in the [NIH SF424 \(R&R\) Application Guide](#).

NOTE: With revisions to [NIH application policies, instructions and forms](#) effective after May 25, 2016, one of the changes is a [new PHS assignment request form](#). This form provides a place to enter the information needed to process a request for a study section or funding institution assignment, as well as information about expertise needed and persons with a potential conflict. The use of this form is required for your request to be brought to the attention of the appropriate review staff. Cover letters should still be used to provide information required for application submission.

Questions? Contact [NDSU Research Development](#), ndsu.researchdev@ndsu.edu