Peer Review Consultation Paper submission

Print

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Yes, NHMRC may publish my submission on the NHMRC website

Agreement:
I agree

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This submission reflects the views of

Views:
An organisation

Organisation Name:
Australian Bioinformatics and Computational Biology Society

Please identify the best term to describe the Organisation:
Other

Please add further information:
Professional Society

Administering Institutions:
Other

Administering Institutions other:
NA

Peer Review Parameters questions

1. Track Record Assessment response:
In the field of bioinformatics/computational biology, track records (TR) are often different from other biomedical disciplines with more middle author publications and researchers may have changed fields. Additionally, first/last author methods papers are unlikely to be in top tier journals. It is imperative that bioinformatics track records are judged using appropriate criteria for the discipline and by assessors who have adequate expertise in the area. Additionally, analysis methods/software should be considered under TR. Software in particular requires substantial commitment to maintain, requiring substantial investment even after publication should be regarded as a separate significant output.

2. Knowledge Gain response:
Novel bioinformatics methods and open source software should be considered as part of the scientific quality of a grant. Significant bioinformatics components of any biomedical research grant should be assessed by appropriate experts. If GRPs continue to be used, all GRPs should be able to have bioinformatics experts call in. Grants could have a check box for “Requires bioinformatics assessment”, which investigators, assigners or others could check to require specialist assessment. Features that could contribute to a well-designed project to develop a bioinformatics method could include software testing approach.

3. Innovation and creativity response:
Novel bioinformatics methods and bespoke methods required to make the most of new data sets can require substantial creativity to produce. Once again, innovation and creativity in computational research needs to be assessed using appropriate criteria and by assessors who have adequate expertise in the area.

4. Significance repsonse:
New bioinformatics methods and software could be considered as significant, as the potential applications of these may be broad.

5. Synergy response:
Modern biomedical research requires true multi-disciplinary partnerships that work together with creativity in order to maximize the value of research funding. In assessing a multi-disciplinary team, it is important to not only determine that investigators come from multiple disciplines, but how they will work together. This will be challenging to assess. Career stage and gender should also be considered.

NHMRC’s Relative to Opportunity and Career Disruption policies questions

2. With respect to peer review, what could be improved in the current Relative to Opportunity policy?:
In bioinformatics and computational biology, it is common for researchers to have started in another discipline (for example mathematics, statistics, computer science or physics) and changed fields. This can make it difficult for bioinformatics researchers to meet the requirements for early/mid-career fellowships if they undertook PhDs in another discipline (e.g. maths, computer science, physics). This is not dealt with adequately by the Relative to Opportunity policy. It would be better dealt with by Career Disruption to allow for extra years to be counted.

Expression of Interest

Expression of Interest response:
An EOI should be under half the length of the full project. We would suggest 4-5 assessors with relevant expertise should see this.

Independent Assessments based on Full Application

Independent Assessments based on Full Application response:
Domain-specific expertise is needed. For example, a bioinformatics research grant should be assessed by assessors with strong expertise and understanding of bioinformatics. If the Independent Assessment was the only review process, 5 independent assessors would be required. It is very difficult to conduct independent assessment blinded, as the investigators would likely reveal themselves as soon as they cited one of their own papers.

Review by Panel

Review by Panel response:
Domain-specific expertise is needed. For example, a bioinformatics research grant should be assessed by members of a panel with strong expertise and understanding of bioinformatics.

Peer review in NHMRC’s new grant program questions

Describe a peer review process that would best support assessment of Ideas Grant applications (considering potential burden on applicants and peer reviewers).:
It was noted that many ABACBS members favoured to two submission rounds per year to help with work/life balance, particularly during the summer period.

Finalise submission

My submission is complete: Complete, this submission is complete and is ready for NHMRC consideration