# Table of Contents

Overview.................................................................................................................................... 5
Associate the RFA (Competitive or Universal) with the Review Event................................. 5
Create Review Event Details...................................................................................................... 9
Add Agency Standard Criteria *(NOAA Only)* .............................................................................13
Specify Additional Review Event Components...........................................................................16
Identify Required / Optional Comments and Scores.................................................................18
Modify the Application Review Criteria.....................................................................................19
Add Not Scored Criteria ............................................................................................................19
Assign Bonus Points...................................................................................................................21
Overview

This document guides the Review Event Manager through the steps to create a Review Event.

The Review Event may be assigned and completed using Grants Online or assigned and completed outside of Grants Online. To successfully use Grants Online for the Review Event process, the Review Event Manager must include all information contained in the corresponding Notice of Funding Opportunity’s (NOFO’s) Evaluation Criteria.

Associate the RFA (Competitive or Universal) with the Review Event

1. From the Search for RFA Launch page, enter information for one of the four data elements on the screen. The search efficiency is improved by entering the minimum number of items possible to retrieve a limited number of records. After specifying the search criteria, click the Search button.

2. When the results are displayed, locate and click the appropriate RFA ID link.
3. Navigate to the bottom of the Competitive RFA Details launch page. Click the ID link next to the Competition.

4. From the Competition launch page, select View Competition Details and click the Submit link.

5. Since no Review Events have been defined at this point, click the Add New link at the bottom of the screen.

6. If there is a need to add multiple Review Events for a competition, they should be entered in the order in which they will be conducted. Each Review Event should have a corresponding set of Reviewer Instructions.
7. When creating a Review Event, initially the user must provide information for two mandatory data elements:

- Review Event Name*
- Review Basis*

In the image below, the Review Basis is **Non-Consensus Panel**. In most cases, this is the logical second Review Basis when the first Review Event was an **Independent Individual Merit Review**. Later in this document, we will walk through the steps associated with the most common initial Review Basis, used for Competitive grants, the **Independent Individual Merit Review**.

As seen in the diagram, the Review Event Manager must select one of the three types of Review Basis. Select the Review Basis carefully; once selected, this data element cannot be changed. The [Department of Commerce (DOC) Grants and Cooperative Agreement Manual](https://www.grants.gov/) provides a description of the Review Groups/Panels.

In the DOC Grants and Cooperative Agreement Manual, please reference:

**Section 8.** Merit Review, Selection, Approval and Notification Procedures

**B.** Review Standards

**6.** Review Groups/Panels

In the three paragraphs (bullets) below, the **bold text** refers to the Review Basis identifier used by the Grants Online system.

The **bold maroon italics** (in parenthesis) refers to the Review Basis identifier used in the Department of Commerce Grants and Cooperative Agreement Manual.

- **Independent Individual Merit (Field Readers/Mail Review)**

  An objective merit review of applications may be obtained by using field readers to whom applications are sent for review and comment. Field readers may also be used as an adjunct to financial assistance application review committees when, for example, the type of expertise needed or the volume of financial assistance applications to be reviewed requires such auxiliary capacity.
Create a Review Event Using Grants Online

- **Non-Consensus Panel** *(Panels/Ad Hoc Committees)*

A panel or *ad hoc* review committee can be used to obtain consensus advice or independent recommendations on the technical merits of applications. Panels including more than one non-Federal member should not use consensus scoring unless they comply with the requirements of the **Federal Advisory Committee Act** (FACA), 5 U.S.C. App. 1.

- **Consensus Panel** *(Federal Advisory Committees)*

Any advisory group, with limited exceptions, that is established or used by a Federal agency and that has at least one member who is not a Federal employee, may implicate the Federal Advisory Committee Act. A program office should consult OGC if it contemplates using a group that includes any non-Federal individuals, to review financial assistance applications.

8. After specifying a Review Event Name* and selecting the Review Basis*, click the **Save** button.
Create Review Event Details

1. When the Review Event is created, the Review Event details page opens for data entry. For this example, we will use the Independent Individual Merit Review as the Review Basis.

2. The first three data elements are supplemented by a brief explanation:
   - Review Event Name* – populated based upon information entered for an earlier data element. This information can be modified as appropriate.
   - Panel Manager* – selected from a dropdown menu (options determined by the user’s Program Office).
   - Review Done By* – there are two radio buttons
     ○ Reviews assigned and completed using Grants Online – or – Reviews assigned and completed outside of Grants Online.
     ○ To maximize the number of scenarios that can be explained in this documentation, we have selected Reviews assigned and completed using Grants Online.

3. The options for the next data element, Scored Criteria*, will be discussed in detail. Each Scored Criteria is associated with a radio button; the Scored Criteria (and the corresponding radio buttons) are mutually exclusive.
   - Applications will not be scored

   This option is appropriate for non-scored Reviews conducted using Grants Online. If this method of scoring is selected, Not Scored Criteria must also be selected and at least one Not Scored Criterion must be created.

   If the user opts to conduct his/her review outside of Grants Online, for a Review Event associated with a Competitive RFA, review documents/attachments must be uploaded to Grants Online.
Create a Review Event Using Grants Online

- **Quantitative – Percent**

Using this method, each criterion is assigned a weighting factor; the sum of all weights must equal 100%. If there are three criteria and one is worth 50%, the other two must equal the remaining 50%. Each criterion has a minimum score and a maximum score (e.g., a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 100).

A Reviewer assigns a score to each of the three criteria. To determine each Reviewer’s application score, each criterion score is multiplied by the weight and summed. Recall operations within the parenthesis receive precedence and are therefore performed before operations that are not enclosed in parenthesis.

**Example:**
Criteria 1: Weight 50%
Criteria 2: Weight 30%
Criteria 3: Weight 20%

Application Reviewer:
- Criteria 1 ➔ Score: 85
- Criteria 2 ➔ Score: 90
- Criteria 3 ➔ Score: 94

**Application Score** for this Reviewer: 
\[(85 \times 0.5) + (90 \times 0.3) + (94 \times 0.2) = 88.3\]

- **Quantitative - Points**

Using this method, each criterion is evaluated by a Reviewer on a scale from the minimum score to the maximum score. To obtain a score for the application from a single Reviewer, add the scored points.

**Example:**
Criteria 1: Maximum Score 30
Criteria 2: Maximum Score 20
Criteria 3: Maximum Score 10
Total Possible Score: 60
Application Reviewer: Criteria 1 ➔ Score: 25  
Criteria 2 ➔ Score: 15  
Criteria 3 ➔ Score: 8

**Application Score** for this Reviewer: 25 + 15 + 8 = 48

- **Qualitative**

Qualitative scoring employs the use of labels (descriptive terms). Each uniquely-named qualitative label is associated with a radio button. All qualitative labels are equally weighted.

In Grants Online, associated with qualitative scoring, there are five default labels (i.e., Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, and Excellent). Grants Online assigns numeric values to each label. In the example where default labels are used, the worst value (poor) receives 1 point; each subsequent label is incremented by 1 point (e.g., fair = 2 points, good = 3 points, very good = 4 points, and excellent = 5 points).

The labels can be modified to include fewer or more descriptive terms. Any combination of descriptors can be utilized when implementing a qualitative scoring method. At a minimum, there must be two descriptors (e.g., Recommended or Not Recommended).

**Example:**
Qualitative Method (with 3 values):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Label</th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Application Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 to 1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.5 to 2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.5 to 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Application Reviewer: Criteria 1 ➔ Score: Good (Value is 2)  
Criteria 2 ➔ Score: Good (Value is 2)  
Criteria 3 ➔ Score: Excellent (Value is 3)

The total score for the application is the sum of scores for the criteria divided by the number of criteria.

**Application Score** for this Reviewer = (Good + Good + Excellent) / 3  
\[ \frac{2 + 2 + 3}{3} = 2.33 \]

The calculated value (2.33) falls within the range of **1.5 to 2.49**. Based upon the calculated value, the corresponding label is **Good**.
Create a Review Event Using Grants Online

4. The default for the data element Summary Score Determination* is N/A. If the user has selected Applications will not be scored for the Scored Criteria, s/he should not modify the default value. For the other three Scored Criteria, the user must select either Mean or Median for the Summary Score Determination*.

5. The next two data elements Anticipated Review Start Date* and Anticipated Review End Date* are mandatory and should be specified as is appropriate (mm/dd/yyyy).

6. Click the Save button at the bottom of the screen. If finished with data entry, click the Save and Return to Main to navigate to the previous screen.
Add Agency Standard Criteria (NOAA Only)

1. Currently only NOAA utilizes the Agency Standard Criteria (one for Fellowships and another for all other project types).

2. The Agency Standard Criteria should parallel the FFO’s content. If the user does not remember the content of the FFO, click the FFO Evaluation Criteria Report link and a copy of the FFO is downloaded to the user’s computer.

3. Earlier in the Create a Review Event scenario, we specified the Scored Criteria as Quantitative – Percent and entered five criteria; that information is visible on the screen image above.

4. The NOAA user may opt to click the Add Agency Standard Criteria link.
5. In addition to the five original criteria, there are five additional criteria (Agency Standard) associated with the Review Event. The score weight for the criteria should be modified so all ten items have non-zero values; the total of the score weights cannot exceed 100. Refer to step 10 (in this section) for an example of appropriately modified Percent Scoring Criteria.

6. Click the Edit link to modify parameters associated with the scoring criteria (i.e., criteria name, minimum score, weight (%), and description). The parameters available for modification are determined by the type of Scored Criteria specified.

Two additional data elements, **Reviewer Comments** and **Reviewer Score** may also be specified.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options Available</th>
<th>Reviewer Comments</th>
<th>Reviewer Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Required</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Required</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Allowed</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. Click the Save button to capture any modifications that were made to the components of the criterion.
8. Repeat steps 6 & 7 as many times as is necessary.

9. Click the **Delete** link to eliminate a criterion.

10. A sample Percent Scoring Criteria, after modifications are made, may resemble the image shown below.

11. When finished making all modifications, click the **Save and Return to Main** button at the bottom of the screen.
Specify Additional Review Event Components

1. Click the **Add New** link to specify additional scoring criteria.

2. Click the **Reorder** link to re-sequence the order of the criteria.

3. The image below represents the initial screen visible when the user selects Scored Criteria \(\rightarrow \) *Quantitative - Percent*. In this case, the user must enter data for the weight of the score associated with each criterion.

4. The image below represents the initial screen visible when the user selects Scored Criteria \(\rightarrow \) *Quantitative – Points*. In this case, the user must enter data for the minimum score and the maximum score.

5. The image below represents the initial screen visible when the user selects Scored Criteria \(\rightarrow \) *Qualitative*. By default, there are five Qualitative scores (Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, and Excellent). The user must enter a minimum of two Qualitative values (e.g., Recommended and Not Recommended).
6. The default value for Not Scored Criteria and Bonus Points is No. If the user selects the Yes radio button for either of these two variables, he/she will have to specify the parameters for additional data elements.

7. When finished entering data for this portion of the Review Event, click the Save and Return to Main button.
Identify Required / Optional Comments and Scores

For each criterion, comments can be indicated as required or optional. When comments are required for a criterion, the Reviewer will not be able to complete or submit his/her review until comments have been entered.

The same rule applies to the score; a score for each criterion can be specified as required or optional. If scores are not required, the scoring of applications is more complicated. However, indicating a criteria score is optional might be useful when Reviewers have different areas of expertise, (e.g., some have financial expertise whereas others have technical expertise).

Although scores may not be required for each criterion on each review, there must be sufficient input to ensure each criterion is scored at least 3 times for each application. When an application is only partially scored by a Reviewer, it is impossible to calculate an application score for that Reviewer.

An example of the Quantitative – Percent process as used to calculate application scores is shown below. An overall score for each of the applications is determined by adding the weighted average scores for each of the three criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CALCULATE THE APPLICATION SCORE</th>
<th>Reviewer 1</th>
<th>Reviewer 2</th>
<th>Reviewer 3</th>
<th>Reviewer 4</th>
<th>Reviewer 5</th>
<th>Reviewer 6</th>
<th>AVERAGE CRITERIA WEIGHTED AVERAGE TOTAL SCORE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Application 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Scientific Merit</td>
<td>90 85 92</td>
<td>99 98 97</td>
<td>96 90 95</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>89 0.5</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Costs</td>
<td>98 0.3</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and Education</td>
<td>92.25 0.2</td>
<td>18.45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCORE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>92.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Scientific Merit</td>
<td>85 83 87</td>
<td>85 88 82</td>
<td>99 91 92</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>85 0.5</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project Costs</td>
<td>85 0.3</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach and Education</td>
<td>93.75 0.2</td>
<td>18.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SCORE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>86.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Grants Online rounds scores to the nearest tenth (e.g., 92.35 is rounded to 92.4; 86.75 is rounded to 86.8; and 88.44 is rounded to 88.4).
Modify the Application Review Criteria

If the Scored Criteria is changed from one type to another (e.g., from Quantitative – Percent to Quantitative – Points), the components of the existing scored criteria are updated to prompt for the components of the new Scored Criteria. For example, when the user changes from percent to points, the weight field is no longer relevant and requires the user provide a value for the maximum score field.

If changing a Not Scored Criteria to a Scored Criterion (Points, Percent, or Qualitative), the Not Scored Criterion method of scoring will be replaced by the scoring method associated with the Scored Criteria.

Add Not Scored Criteria

For both scored Review Events and not scored Review Events, Not Scored Criteria can be added. If appropriate, Not Scored Criteria can be set to one of three evaluation methods:

- Not Scored
- Quantitative – Points
- Bonus Points.

When both Scored (in this case, Percent Scoring Criteria) and Not Scored Criteria exist, the message shown below is visible on the screen.

1. Click the Reorder Scored and Not Scored Criteria link to modify the default criteria order.
2. Click the **Up** or **Down** buttons to reorder (intermingle) if appropriate the scoring criteria.

3. When finished reordering the criteria list, click the **Save** button.

4. Adding a new scored or not scored criterion will cause any previously-specified reordering to revert to the default order.

5. In addition, adding one or more **Not Scored Criteria** and setting the Reviewer Comments to Not Allowed allows the user to add section headings to the scored criteria.
Assign Bonus Points
NOTE: This Review Event Component is not available.