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National Science Foundation
2415 Eisenhower Avenue
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RE: Request for Information on National Science Board National Science Foundation Merit Review Commission Review of NSF's Merit Review Policy and Processes

The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology (ASBMB) is an international nonprofit scientific and educational organization that represents about 12,000 students, researchers, educators, and industry professionals. The ASBMB strongly advocates for strengthening the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) workforce, supporting sustainable funding for the American research enterprise, ensuring diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion (DEAI) in STEM, and addressing emerging issues in the scientific enterprise.

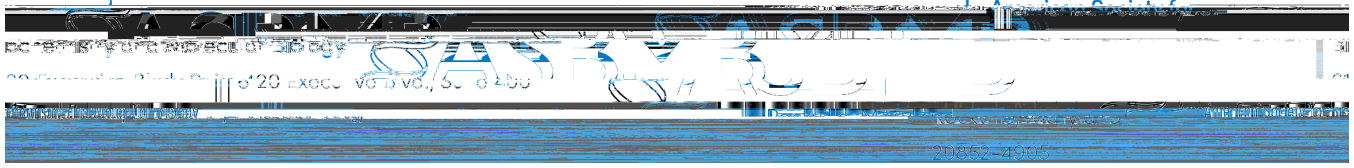
The American Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology appreciates the opportunity to submit feedback to the National Science Foundation's (NSF) merit review commission. The society has watched closely as the commission has met to discuss updating review criteria and implementation practices in the review process. The ASBMB has input for each topic:

1. Updating Review Criteria

The society commends the NSF for taking steps to examine its merit review process. Maintaining upkeep of the review process is important to sustaining a healthy, innovative scientific ecosystem. As NSF updates the merit review process, ASBMB recommends that the agency gather input on the initial draft from the scientific community. The society also recommends that components of the draft include ~~weight~~ the intellectual merit and broader impacts review criteria. The current process places no ~~weight~~ on the review criteria. The lack of guidance has resulted in [inconsistent evaluations from reviewers and program officers](#)

To align funding priorities with the mission of the agency and emphasize the importance for scientific innovation, ASBMB strongly encourages NSF to lead with intellectual merit when evaluating review criteria. Prioritizing intellectual merit would allow investigators to dedicate more time and funding to their research and to accelerate scientific discoveries.

2. Implementing Review Criteria



grants reviewers more time to thoroughly provide feedback to applications and should continue to be a part of the review process.

5. Awardee Support

Awardee support can be significantly improved by the creation of a user-friendly reporting system for award progress report

6. Other Suggestions and Comments

NSF does not have a unified process for soliciting reviewers. It is conducted at the discretion of program directors, giving them more latitude to decide the outcomes of application evaluations instead of the reviewers with specific expertise. NSF should establish a formal application process for interested peer reviewers.