

DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION
CIRM MANAGEMENT RESPONSE RE: LITTLE HOOVER RECOMMENDATIONS

(6) Modify pre-application review process

The ICOC agreed to have a trial period for the pre-application process over three RFAs, Basic Biology I, Disease Team Research Awards and Basic Biology II. This trial period is still in progress and information collection is incomplete as is the analysis and evaluation. The results of this experiment will be completed, analyzed and evaluated and presented to the ICOC in December 2009. We will provide recommended modifications at that time.

(7) Identify all of the applicants in connection with an RFA on a trial basis.

We believe very strongly that this is inappropriate – no granting agencies that we are aware of follow this procedure other than Connecticut. It is not considered a best practice nor is it commonly used. Confidentiality is critical to ensuring the integrity of the peer review process. Names of submitting institutions and individuals, as well as application content and peer evaluations, are kept confidential, except to those involved in the review process, to the extent permitted by law. Disclosure of scientists' failures in grant competition would have a negative impact on their careers and make them reluctant to propose highly innovative projects that often move the science forward. CIRM plans to expand its partnerships with industry will be compromised by disclosure of unsuccessful applications that could thwart a company's ability to raise funds.

(8) Poll peer reviewers to determine whether they would resign if they were required to publicly disclose their financial interests.

CIRM staff will take an informal poll of GWG members and alternates attending the next GWG meeting to find out whether they would be willing to continue serving if: 1) the financial disclosure documents that they are currently required to complete were to be made public, or 2) they were required to complete and make public the Form 700.

(12) Eliminate the 50-employee cap.

Currently CIRM is challenged by the 50-employee cap. We are reviewing this matter but remain committed to keeping within the 6% cap on use of Bond Funds for administrative expenditures.

(13) Eliminate the 15-scientist cap on the GWG.

Elimination of the cap of 15 scientific GWG members/alternates participation in a GWG meeting will not significantly affect the GWG's capacity to review more grant applications. The real limiting factor for review is time. At a review meeting the GWG can only discuss and score about 50 total applications per day for regular research grants and perhaps 15 to 20 for larger proposals such as Disease Teams or Training Grants. Increasing the number of GWG members at a review will not speed up the rate at which each application is reviewed. In fact it may increase that review time to accommodate discussion by additional members. Thus, regardless of the number of participating GWG members, review of additional applications will require additional meeting days and increased CIRM staff time to manage the reviews and write review summaries. We believe (based on comments from reviewers) that larger groups would be less focused and engaged, and longer meetings would lead to reduced willingness to attend.