CONFIDENTIALITY

MAINTAINING CONFIDENTIALITY OF THE PEER REVIEW MATERIALS AND MEETING DISCUSSIONS

All materials and discussions that are pertinent to the applications or proposals being reviewed are privileged communications to be shared only with consultants (reviewers) and NIH staff. These materials must not be shared or discussed with other individuals. Reviewers must not solicit opinions or reviews on particular applications/proposals or parts thereof from anyone who is not officially on the review panel. However, reviewers may suggest scientists from whom the Scientific Review Officer (SRO) may subsequently obtain advice regarding this review. Reviewers must leave all review materials with the SRO or agree to destroy all the review-related material themselves at the conclusion of the review meeting. Privileged information in grant applications/proposals must not be shared with anyone or used to benefit the reviewer.

Under no circumstances should the reviewers inform applicants/offerors, their organizations, or anyone else of recommendations or discussions from the review proceedings. Applicants/offerors may make unwise decisions or actions on the basis of premature or erroneous information. Such disclosure also represents an unfair intrusion into the privileged nature of the review and invades the privacy of fellow reviewers who are serving on review committees and site visit teams. A breach of confidentiality could deter qualified consultants from serving on future review committees and inhibit consultants who do serve from engaging in a free and full discussion of recommendations.

There must be no direct communications between reviewers and applicants except during site visits. Any and all requests or correspondence from applicants must be directed to and handled by the SRO. Any and all requests or correspondence from offerors must be directed to and handled by the Contracting Officer.