OVERALL IMPACT VERSUS SIGNIFICANCE

OVERALL IMPACT

Overall Impact refers to the reviewer’s assessment of the “likelihood for the project to exert a sustained, powerful influence on the research field(s) involved,” in consideration of the five core review criteria—Significance, Investigators, Innovation, Approach, and Environment—and the additional review criteria (e.g. Human Subjects Protection, Animal Welfare, Biohazards) as applicable for the proposed project.

Key Points

- Overall Impact is not a sixth review criterion.
- It considers but is distinct from, the five core review criteria.
- It is not the arithmetic mean of the scores for the five core review criteria.
- It represents the synthesis/integration of the five core review criteria that are scored individually plus the additional review criteria that are not scored individually (Human Subjects Protections, Vertebrate Animal Welfare, Biohazards, etc.).
- An application does not need to be strong in all five of the core review criteria to be judged likely to have a major scientific impact. It is possible for one or more review criteria to overshadow the other review criteria, thus driving the Overall Impact score up or down.
- Weigh the different criteria as appropriate for each application in deriving the Overall Impact/Priority score.

SIGNIFICANCE

Significance relates to the following questions: Does the project address an important problem or critical barrier to progress in the field? If the aims of the project are achieved, how will scientific knowledge, technical capability, and/or clinical practice be improved? How will the successful completion of the aims change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

Key points

- Significance is evaluated and scored independently as one of the five core criteria.
- It is a stand-alone assessment of the project’s goals in the context of the relevant field(s).
- It assumes that the “aims of the project are achieved” and/or will be “successfully completed.”
- A project’s “significance” is always evaluated within the context of a research field(s).
- For example, development of an HIV/AIDS vaccine is a significant field of study, but not all projects that propose to develop such a vaccine are significant or address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field.