

# Responding to critiques

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# Don't be discouraged

- Triage doesn't mean your grant was bad, just that it had problems that kept it in the lower half. Don't take it personally.
- If you respond to critiques your score is likely to get better.

# Important components of a response

- **Tone**
- **How well did you respond to suggestions?**
- **What have you added to strengthen the grant?**

# First steps

- **Read the reviews again carefully after you have calmed down**
- **If you don't understand the comments, call your program official. They can be very helpful**
- **Don't rush to resubmit if you haven't been able to address the reviewer's major concerns**
- **Think hard about switching study sections. Many study sections give a boost to revised grants.**

# Tone

- **NEVER** insult the previous reviewer. Don't be sarcastic or condescending.
- It doesn't hurt to thank the previous reviewer for helpful comments. They will be pleased if your grant gets better.
- If the reviewer is confused, assume that you did not write something clearly enough.
- If you feel the previous review is personally insulting or inappropriate, contact the SRA or your program official.

# Responsiveness

- Try to respond to each suggestion in your intro
- If you can't do a suggested experiment, carefully explain why

# Common criticisms

- Requests for additional preliminary data could mean that the reviewer is not convinced that the experiments will work, or it may mean that you need to go through another round (get in line).
- “...not sure how much new information these experiments will provide” can mean that the reviewer is bored with your work, or can't see how it will move the field forward. You need to justify your work and explain why it is important.

# Common criticisms

- “lack of productivity” usually refers to papers. Make sure you provide details on any new papers in your update
- If they don’t like an aim, decide if you might be able to drop it. You can write a grant with two aims
- Don’t ignore requests for controls
- Make sure that your budget matches the work. A greedy budget can color the reviewer’s opinion of your proposal.

# Strengthening your grant

- **New data is nice. Be careful not to provide confusing data in your update (but do send an update)**
- **Make sure you look at the list of permanent members of the committee, and don't ignore their work**
- **Keep the grant as simple as possible**
- **Include some open-ended experiments, or give a sense of where the work is going**
- **PROOFREAD**

# **The single most important thing you can do to ensure success**

- **Get others to read and critique your grant!**
  - **At least 1 month before deadline - recruit at least one reader who will give you honest feedback**
  - **2 weeks before deadline - Give what you consider a complete and final version of your grant to your reader(s)**
  - **If your reader doesn't understand what you are proposing to do, or why you are doing it, the reviewer probably won't either**

**Good Luck!**