

# Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation Grant Review Protocol

Approved by SAB and the Meso Foundation Board of Directors

The Mesothelioma Applied Research Foundation's (Meso Foundation) peer reviewed grant policy is intended to ensure that grant applications submitted to the Meso Foundation are evaluated on the basis of a process that is fair, equitable, timely, and free of bias. The peer reviewed process is carried out by doctors and researchers who work within the mesothelioma field and are from around the world. They are referred to below as the scientific review panel. The grant review process is overseen by the Meso Foundation's Science Advisory Board (SAB) chair.

## **Grant Review Protocol:**

### **I. Conflicts of Interest:**

A grant reviewer is considered to have a conflict of interest with an application if he/she:

- is from the same immediate department, institution, organization or company as the applicant, **and** who interacts with the applicant in the course of his/her duties at the department, institution, organization or company;
- has collaborated, been a co-applicant or published with the applicant within the last five years on the specific topic relevant to the grant application (exception will be made for Meso funded networks designed to increase partnerships among disciplines, institutions and thematic research);
- has been a student or supervisor of the applicant within the last five years;
- is a close personal friend or relative of the applicant;
- has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the applicant;
- is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the application (e.g., holds stock in the company of an industry partner or a competitor); or
- for some other reason feels that he/she cannot provide an objective review of the application.

All grant reviewers (Chair, Medical Liaison, reviewers, etc.) are subject to the same conflict of interest guidelines. Staff and the Chair are responsible for resolving areas of uncertainty during a grants meeting.

Each grant reviewer will be asked to disclose any conflicts of interest before the grant review process begins.

### **II. First stage initial review:**

The scientific review panel is split into teams of three or four depending upon the number of applicants. Each team will review approximately ten applications. In

reviewing each application, the reviewer will look at each investigator's application and give the investigator a score of 1 through 9 in the following areas:

- **Scientific Merit-** Are the overall strategy, methodology, and analyses well-reasoned and appropriate to accomplish the specific aims of the project? Are potential problems, alternative strategies, and benchmarks for success presented? If the project is in the early stages of development, will the strategy establish feasibility and will particularly risky aspects be managed?
- **Originality/Innovation-** Is this a new idea, concept or approach?
- **Study Design-** Does the proposal include a clear statement of purpose? Does the methodology of the proposed research follow accepted scientific protocol? Have adequate procedures and safeguards been included in the proposal to assure the validity of the data?
- **Scientific Impact-** Degree to which the project addresses an issue of significant importance to the challenge of mesothelioma and the likelihood of a broad medical and societal impact.
- **Practicality and feasibility-** Will it be possible to complete the research in the two year time frame, and can the research yield tangible results?

A score of one is the highest and nine is the lowest. The following chart is given as guidance to the reviewers to determine individual review criterion and overall impact/priority scores.

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Additional Guidance on Strengths and Weaknesses
High	1	Exceptional	Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses
High	2	Outstanding	Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses
High	3	Excellent	Very strong with only some minor weaknesses
Medium	4	Very Good	Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses
Medium	5	Good	Strong but with at least one moderate weakness
Medium	6	Satisfactory	Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses
Low	7	Fair	Some strengths but with at least one major weakness
Low	8	Marginal	A few strengths and a few major weaknesses

Low	9	Poor	Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses
<p><b>Minor Weakness:</b> An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen impact</p> <p><b>Moderate Weakness:</b> A weakness that lessens impact</p> <p><b>Major Weakness:</b> A weakness that severely limits impact</p>			

The scientific review panel is asked to write comments on each grant reviewed that will help the investigator with future grants. (Bullet format is preferred)

The scores of all reviewers will be collected by the Grants Manager. The scores will be totaled and an average score will be calculated from the scores given by the team. These scores will be reviewed by the SAB Chair who reviews all grants and the Medical Liaison. If any discrepancies arise, the SAB Chair, Medical Liaison and the Grants Manager will convene by phone to discuss. This may include calling the reviewer to make sure that they scored the investigator properly. Once all anomalies are straightened out, the scores are ranked. The top 20-25 grants that scored the best out of all the grants reviewed will move on to the second stage in the review process.

### III. Second stage detailed review

This round, the teams get to review a different set of grants to review and score. Primary and secondary reviewers will be assigned by the SAB chair and the Medical Liaison based on their expertise on the topic. Each reviewer will score this new set of grants by using the same review process outlined in the initial review. The reviewers will write comments on each grant reviewed that should help the investigator with future grants. The primary reviewer will be responsible for giving a brief overview of the grant to the rest of the scientific review panel when the reviewer's conference call takes place. (See Section IV)

All scores will be totaled and an average score will be calculated. These scores will be reviewed by the SAB Chair, who reviews all grants, and the Medical Liaison. The same protocol will be followed as in the initial review process to make sure there are no abnormalities in the scores.

### IV. Reviewers' conference call

The SAB Chair will convene all the reviewers on a conference call. The grants deemed appropriate for possible funding will be discussed in greater detail. The scientific review panel will then rank the top grants in order and give that ranking to the Meso Foundation's Board of Directors for final approval. Based upon the funding available, grants will be awarded.

### V. Progress Reports

Once the investigator has been chosen to be a grant recipient of the Meso Foundation, they are required to submit progress reports and disposition of funds reports semi-annually. These reports must show that the investigator is following the specific aims laid out in the grant proposal and keeping within the terms of the grant agreement. These progress reports will be reviewed by the SAB Chair and the Medical Liaison. If a

grant recipient violates the terms of the agreement, the Meso Foundation has the right to terminate the grant. If the research by the investigator is not following the specific aims in the grant proposal, the investigator will be contacted by letter to notify them of steps that need to be made to resolve the issue. If the investigator fails to follow-up on the steps outlined, the grant will be terminated and the remaining funds will be returned to the Meso Foundation.

### **Definition of Roles:**

Science Advisory Board (SAB) Chair – The SAB Chair oversees the grantmaking process. He/She is responsible for reviewing all grants and making sure that the process is fair, equitable, timely, and free of bias.

Scientific Review Panel – A panel of researchers and doctors who will be in charge of reviewing and critiquing the grant proposals.

Team – The Scientific Review Panel is broken into teams that will review a set number of grant proposals.

Reviewer – This is a doctor or researcher that is in charge of reviewing the grant proposals assigned to their team.

Primary Reviewer – In the second stage of review, all reviewers will be asked to be a primary reviewer on a few grant proposals. This means that the reviewer will be responsible for outlining the grant proposal to the rest of the scientific review panel on the conference call.

Investigator – This is the person who submitted the grant proposal and is requesting funding from the Meso Foundation.