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## Executive Summary

Changes to the main NIH grant application that have been in effect since Jan. 25, 2010 – shortening the form considerably and changing somewhat its emphasis — have now undergone a full cycle of submissions by principal investigators and reviews by government reviewers.

Karin D. Rodland, PhD, Laboratory Fellow and Chief Scientist - NIH Programs, Biological Sciences Division, at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, Richland, Wash., says she hasn't seen any problems at the review level. She emphasizes that "current NIH policy for review of the short forms, at least during this transitional period, is that submitters should not be penalized at the score level for failure to comply with the new requirements for the Biosketch and Resource pages." However, "non-compliance should be noted in the Other Comments section of the review."

Rodland reports that the NIH "wants to know if applicants are using sections outside the page limits — e.g., Human Subjects, Vertebrate Animals, Data & Resource Sharing — to circumvent the page limits by moving experimental details to those sections." It's always best, she says, to use the form in the way it was designed: as a shorter, more streamlined application process that's focused on two key issues:

1. Will the research you're proposing result in a clinically relevant product or a game-changing shift in your area of research?
2. Are you the best researcher to make that happen?

A good way to test whether your application answers those questions adequately, Rodland says, is to use the "elevator speech" as a template for the all-important first page of the new form, where you detail your specific aims.

Imagine you're in an elevator with Bill Gates, and he has a billion dollars he wants to invest in research. Even if you're going from the penthouse to the parking garage, you have about three minutes to convince him that what you want to do needs to be done — and that you can do it. That's because most reviewers essentially make up their minds about the fundability of your proposal as they read the first page. Then they read the rest of the application looking for support for that original impression.

### Use storytelling tactics to engage reviewers

Write your proposal as if you're telling a story. You're trying to get the reviewer emotionally involved to the point the he or she wants to see your project funded. All good stories have a resolution. Yours is how the field will be changed as a result of your research and how future research will be enabled by it. That's the impact part. All grant proposals should end with a short paragraph that goes over the impact:

"At the end of the day, when this research is done, my field of research will be changed because we will know [fill in the blank] and we will then be able to go on and do [fill in the blank]." It's where you tell reviewers what happens next.

Those are the key points principal investigators should be aware of regarding the shortened grant application forms. Throughout the document, themes have evolved and specific points have changed.