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Carney Institute for Brain Science
BROWN UNIVERSITY

Zimmerman Innovation Awards in Brain Science

2025 Submission Date

Instructions for Review of Applications (Internal Review)

Thank you for agreeing to review applications to the Zimmerman Innovation Awards in Brain Science. Note that applicants received these instructions as part of the call for proposals. **These instructions are provided to guide reviews by the internal (Brown faculty) review panel.** The Carney Institute reserves the right to solicit reviews from external experts. The external reviewers will assess the innovation of proposals based on the one-page Project Aims.

Summary of Internal Review Process:

- All reviewers will read and score all applications according to the criteria below. In addition, each reviewer is assigned as the primary reviewer for a subset of the applications. The primary reviewer for a proposal will also provide 3-4 bullet points of strengths and weaknesses of that proposal.
- We will hold a 2-hour meeting of the review committee. The committee will discuss the applications and agree on a priority list of applications recommended for funding. The committee will also agree on 3-4 bullet points for each application summarizing strengths and weaknesses of the application.
- The Carney Institute will consider the recommendations of the review committee and make final funding decisions. Applicants will receive the bullet list of strengths and weaknesses.

Full Instructions

We received XX applications in the AD/general pool of the Carney Institute Innovation Awards 2025 call. Applications can be accessed here. Please read and score each application using the score sheet provided, and according to the instructions and criteria below.

The Carney Institute convened a review committee composed of brain science and innovation experts, with a broad range of expertise. We strive to convene a committee that includes expertise directly relevant to each proposal, however each application is reviewed by reviewers outside the applicant(s) discipline. Applications should have been prepared with this in mind, avoiding jargon when possible and providing appropriate context and details for the application to be evaluated by a reviewer not from the immediate sub-field. Applicants were encouraged to focus on making a compelling case for the impact, innovation and feasibility of the project, and to include technical details only to the extent that they demonstrate feasibility. **Innovation is a priority; applications deemed to have high impact and feasibility but low or moderate innovation will receive lower priority than applications with higher innovation.**

Each reviewer has been assigned three to four applications for which he or she will serve as the primary reviewer. For the applications where you are the primary reviewer, please write 3-4 bullet points summarizing the strengths and weaknesses of the project, and submit these with

your score sheet. Please come to the review meeting prepared to present the proposal briefly – describe the project, the team, and your assessment of strengths and weaknesses. In order to efficiently move through all the applications, please make this presentation in 3 minutes or less. The committee will agree on a consensus priority ranking of each application, as well as 3-4 bullet points of an application's strengths and weaknesses, which will be provided to the applicant(s).

Please return your completed score sheet and comments by [DATE]. Your scores, along with those of the other reviewers will be averaged and summarized before the meeting to help streamline and guide the discussion.

Review Criteria

Please provide a score for each of these criteria:

- Impact – Score reflects how well the application addresses the following questions:
    - Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in tackling a significant scientific or societal need?
    - If the project is successful, what are the ultimate prospects for advancing:
        - scientific knowledge;
        - broadly available research tools and techniques;
        - disease diagnosis, treatment, and prevention;
        - or other broad scientific or societal benefit?
    - Does the applicant present a compelling long-term vision for how the ideas begun under the Innovation Award will progress and develop?
    - Does the applicant describe the long-term intellectual arc of the project, the path and timeline from idea to impact, and a plan to continue the research project at Brown beyond the period of the Innovation Award?
- Innovation – Score reflects how well the application addresses the following questions:
    - What potential does the project have to change our thinking about its topic, relative to the typical scientific project?
    - Does the project tackle a significant unanswered scientific question or societal need, in a novel way?
    - Are the concepts, tools and techniques, or other outcomes that would ultimately result from the project novel and relevant beyond a narrow specialized field?
    - Does the project integrate knowledge or approaches from disparate fields in a novel way?
    - Does the project take appropriate risks and does the project have a sensible plan for managing risk?
- Feasibility – Score reflects how well the application addresses the following questions:
    - Does the team propose a sound strategy, with robust methods and design to execute the project?
    - Has an appropriate team been assembled to execute the project?
    - Does the applicant have an appropriate and compelling plan in place for continuing the project at the conclusion of the Innovation Award?
    - Is the proposed budget appropriate for the proposed scope of research?

    - For renewal requests, did the investigators make appropriate progress and provide sufficient rationale for additional funding that would rank the project above funding a new project?

Score each category using the NIH score system from 1 (best) to 9 (worst). Aim to use the entire scale.

- 1 Exceptional (High)
- 2 Outstanding (High)
- 3 Excellent (High)
- 4 Very Good (Medium)
- 5 Good (Medium)
- 6 Satisfactory (Medium)
- 7 Fair (Low)
- 8 Marginal (Low)
- 9 Poor (Low)

Rank

In addition to the scores, please provide an overall ranking from 1 to XX (this is not necessarily an average of your scores in each category). If you feel that two or more proposals are equally strong you may give them the same ranking but then skip an appropriate number of rankings so that you use the full range (for instance, if two proposals are ranked 4th, there would be no 5th ranked proposal and the next strongest proposal would be ranked 6th). **This ranking should take into account that *Innovation* is a priority. As stated above, applications deemed to have high impact and feasibility but low or moderate innovation will receive lower priority than applications with higher innovation.**

Feedback to applicants

During the committee meeting, the committee will agree on 3-4 bullet points outlining each application's strengths and weaknesses, which will be provided to the applicant. These bullet points will focus on how successfully the application conveys the impact, innovation, and feasibility of the project, rather than a detailed technical review of the project. The primary reviewer's bullet points will provide the starting point for discussion for each application; the committee will revise these based on the discussion during the committee meeting.

Reviewer scores and committee discussions shall remain strictly confidential.

Thank you for your time and effort!