

APPENDIX 14.

Postponement Guidelines

This replaces Bulletin No. 07-601:
Guidelines for the Postponement of Research Project Plan Peer Reviews

Postponement of peer review will be approved only under special circumstances where potential options have been exhausted. Once a panel has been appointed for review of a set of project plans removal or postponement of plans undermines the credibility and integrity of the Agency and its peer review process. Cooperation at all program and administrative levels is needed to ensure that deadlines are met and that plans are reviewed on time. Before considering postponement, the Lead Scientist and Research Leader, Center/Institute/Laboratory Director are expected to make every effort to complete the plan as scheduled.

While requests for postponement are not frequently approved, there are criteria that may support such a request:

1. Key Scientific Leadership Vacancies and Long-Term Absences. Departure or absences of key staff or new appropriations providing for new projects may result in critical leadership vacancies. Departure or absences of staff or new appropriations may result in projects with critical vacancies in leadership and/or scientific expertise. Where vacancies or absences are anticipated, it is expected that options to enable completion of the project plan will be diligently considered. Note that the absence of a single scientist, other than the Lead Scientist, from a multiple-scientist project is generally not sufficient to warrant postponement of review.

2. Significant Reorganization or Redirection of Research. Reorganization or redirection of research projects should be done in sufficient time to allow development of project plans on the assigned National Program schedule (see *Schedule of Peer Reviews* at www.ars.usda.gov/osqr). Postponement will be considered when unanticipated appropriations or actions that result in initiation, reorganization, or redirection of research are received.

It is anticipated that careful consideration of all options will result in very few requests for postponement. Consultation with the Area Director and appropriate National Program Leader and Deputy Administrator must occur before requesting postponement. Requests for approval of a postponement originate with the Lead Scientist or Research Leader and addressed to the Associate Administrator, Research Management and Operations. (See the memo template below.) It is important that the request for a postponement be made before an OSQR Review Panel has been selected and it is expected that requests generally would not be made after receipt of a PDRAM by the Area Director.

The memo to the Associate Administrator contains the following information:

1. Project Number
2. Title of the Project

3. National Program
4. Management Unit
5. Name of the Lead Scientist
6. Name of the Research Leader, Center/Institute/Laboratory Director (if applicable), Area Director, National Program Leader, and Deputy Administrator, who the memo goes “through” for concurrence.
7. Investigators assigned to the project and percent time contribution by each.
8. Specific reason(s) for the requested postponement.
9. Efforts made to complete the project plan write-up, and why they were unsuccessful.
10. Time period of the requested postponement and proposed date when the plan will be ready for review.

Requests for postponement are routed electronically (as a Microsoft Word file) through the Research Leader, the appropriate Center/Institute/Laboratory Director, Area Director, and the appropriate National Program Leader and Deputy Administrator, with a copy to the relevant Area and National Program Analyst. *In addition, an electronic copy of the request is sent to OSQR at the time it is initially sent from the Area to the National Program Leader* (Please note cc's on the sample memo provided). If the Deputy Administrator recommends approval of the postponement, the request then is forwarded by OSQR to the Associate Administrator, Research Management and Operations; who will approve or disapprove the request. Postponement requests should NOT be sent directly to the Associate Administrator, Research Management and Operations, but are routed through OSQR.

The Associate Administrator's decision is sent by email to the Area Director with a copy to the National Program Leader, Deputy Administrator, and OSQR. The relevant Area and ONP Program Analysts are informed of the decision by OSQR.

Until a request for postponement is approved, plans are due as originally scheduled.

1) Responsibilities

All involved, line management and National Program Staff, are to make every effort to ensure that research projects are submitted in a timely manner for peer review.

1. Associate Administrator for Research Management and Operations, where applicable, through the OSQR, assures ARS is in compliance with P.L. 104-185; Section 103(d). Considers reasons why project has not met schedule along with recommendations for the postponement, makes, and communicates a final decision of approval or disapproval, and expected date of submission of the project for review to the Area Director, Deputy Administrator, National Program Leader, and OSQR.
2. Office of Scientific Quality Review administers and provides guidance on the ARS Peer Review Process. Tracks progress and status of postponement requests and transmits those recommended for approval by Deputy Administrators to the Associate Administrator for Research Operations and Management.

3. Area Directors discuss, review rationale for the project not meeting the schedule, and approve or disapprove requests for the postponement. Consider input on the rationale for postponements from the Lead Scientists, Research Leader, Center/Institute/Laboratory Director and National Program Team.
4. National Program Leaders and Deputy Administrators discuss, review rationale for the projects not meeting the schedule, and approve or disapprove requests for the postponement of peer review.
5. Research Leaders review and approve or disapprove requests for the postponement of peer reviews. Research Leaders may also initiate requests for postponements.
6. Lead Scientists (or individuals acting in their capacity) request postponement of the peer review after all alternatives and options to submit the project in a timely manner have been exhausted.
7. Program Analyst tracks requests through ARIS Peer Review Tracking System.

Template – Memo Requesting Postponement Approval

Note: The Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR) should receive a copy of the initial request and, if recommended for approval, the complete request for transmittal to and approval or disapproval by the Associate Administrator, Research Management and Operations.

[Date]

SUBJECT: Request for Approval of Postponement of Project [number]
[Title] from NP [number] Peer Review Session

TO: Caird E. Rexroad
Associate Administrator
Research Management and Operations

THROUGH: _____
Deputy Administrator, Division

National Program Leader

Area Director, Area

Center/Institute/Laboratory Director, Unit Name

Research Leader, Management Unit

FROM: _____
Lead Scientist, Management Unit

We request that the project [title] be postponed from the peer review scheduled for [month, year] by the Office of Scientific Quality Review [peer/ad hoc/re-review] panel as part of the review of NP [number] project plans.

Reason for Request: *Provide a clear description of the circumstances that preclude review, and options considered for completion of the plan.*

Lead Scientist: *Lead SY*

Investigators: *List investigators with percent time, as shown on the project cover sheet*

Time period of the requested postponement and anticipated date of submission: *[month, year]*

cc:

OSQR

Area PA

ONP PA

From OSQR: If postponement is approved, OSQR anticipates this plan would be in the following review: *[date]*