

**US ARMY MEDICAL RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT COMMAND (USAMRDC)
CONGRESSIONALLY DIRECTED MEDICAL RESEARCH PROGRAMS (CDMRP)
FISCAL YEAR 2022 (FY22) EPILEPSY RESEARCH PROGRAM (ERP)**

DESCRIPTION OF REVIEW PROCEDURES

The programmatic strategy implemented by the FY22 ERP called for applications in response to a program announcement (PA) for the Virtual Post-Traumatic Epilepsy Research Center Leadership Award (Virtual P-TERC-L) mechanism released in March 2022.

For the Virtual P-TERC-L Award PA, Principal Investigators (PIs) were asked to submit a letter of intent to submit a full application. Applications were received in June 2022 and peer-reviewed in August 2022. Stage 1 programmatic review was conducted in September 2022, and Stage 2 programmatic review was conducted in October 2022.

In response to the Virtual P-TERC-L award PA, eight compliant applications were received, four were recommended for invitation for Stage 2 programmatic review (oral presentation). Two of the applications were recommended for funding for a total of \$1.2 million (M).

Submission and award data for the FY22 ERP is summarized in the table below.

Table 1. Submission/Award Data for the FY22 ERP

Mechanism	Compliant Applications Received	Applications Recommended for Stage 2 Programmatic Review	Applications Recommended for Funding
Virtual P-TERC-L Award	8	4	2

*These data reflect funding recommendations only. Pending FY22 award negotiations, final numbers will be available after September 30, 2023.

THE TWO-TIER REVIEW SYSTEM

The USAMRDC developed a review model based on recommendations of the 1993 Institute of Medicine (IOM) (now called the National Academy of Medicine) of the National Academy of Sciences report, *Strategies for Managing the Breast Cancer Research Program: A Report to the Army Medical Research and Development Command*. The IOM report recommended a two-tier review process and concluded that the best course would be to establish a peer review system that reflects not only the traditional strengths of existing peer review systems, but also is tailored to accommodate program goals. The Command has adhered to this proven approach for evaluating competitive applications. An application must be favorably reviewed by both levels of the two-tier review system to be funded.

THE FIRST TIER—Scientific Peer Review

Virtual Post-Traumatic Epilepsy Research Center Leadership Award applications were peer reviewed in August 2022 by a panel of researchers, clinicians, and consumer advocates based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

The peer review panel included a Chair, four scientific reviewers, one consumer reviewer, and a non-voting Scientific Review Officer. The primary responsibility of the panelists was to review the technical merit of each application based on the evaluation criteria specified in the PA.

Individual Peer Review Panels

The Chair for the panel presided over the deliberations. Applications were discussed individually. The Chair called on the assigned reviewers for an assessment of the merits of each application using the evaluation criteria published in the PA. Following a panel discussion, the Chair summarized the strengths and weaknesses of each application, and the panel members then rated the applications confidentially.

Application Scoring

Evaluation Criteria Scores: Panel members were asked to rate each peer review evaluation criterion as published in the PA. A scale of 1 to 10 was used, with 1 representing the lowest merit and 10 the highest merit, using whole numbers only. The main reasons for obtaining the criteria ratings were to (1) place emphasis on the published evaluation criteria and provide guidance to reviewers in determining an appropriate overall score and (2) provide the applicant, the Programmatic Panel, and the Command with an informed measure of the quality regarding the strengths and weaknesses of each application. The evaluation criteria scores were not averaged or mathematically manipulated in any manner to connect them to the global or percentile scores.

Overall Score: To obtain an overall score, a range of 1.0 to 5.0 was used (1.0 representing the highest merit and 5.0 the lowest merit). Reviewer scoring was permitted in 0.1 increments. Panel member scores were averaged and rounded to arrive at a two-digit number (1.2, 1.9, 2.7, etc.). The following adjectival equivalents were used to guide reviewers: Outstanding (1.0–1.5), Excellent (1.6–2.0), Good (2.1–2.5), Fair (2.6–3.5), and Deficient (3.6–5.0).

Summary Statements: The Scientific Review Officer on each panel was responsible for preparing a Summary Statement reporting the results of the peer review for each application. The Summary Statements included the evaluation criteria and overall scores, peer reviewers' written comments, and essence of the panel discussions. This document was used to report the peer review results to the Programmatic Panel. It is the policy of the USAMRDC to make Summary Statements available to each applicant when the review process has been completed.

THE SECOND TIER—Programmatic Review

Stage 1 Programmatic review was conducted in September 2022, and Stage 2 Programmatic review was conducted in October 2022. Stage 1 and Stage 2 programmatic reviews were conducted by the FY22 Programmatic Panel, which is comprised of a diverse group of basic and clinical scientists and consumer advocates, each contributing special expertise or interest in epilepsy. Programmatic review is a comparison-based process that considers scientific evaluations across all disciplines and specialty areas. Programmatic Panel members do not automatically recommend funding applications that were highly rated in the technical merit review process; rather, they carefully scrutinize applications to allocate the limited funds available to support each of the award mechanisms as wisely as possible. Programmatic review criteria published in the PA for the Virtual P-TERC-L PA for Stage 1 were as follows: ratings

and evaluations of the peer reviewers; vision of the Virtual P-TERC; relative impact; program portfolio composition; and adherence to the intent of the award mechanism. For Stage 2 programmatic review the criteria include: capabilities to lead the Virtual P-TERC and foster the Faculty's professional development, collaborations, and career growth while providing opportunities to increase the visibility of Faculty within the PTE research and advocacy communities; evaluation of the proposed milestones, outcomes, and metrics of success for the Faculty during their involvement in the Virtual P-TERC; justification of proposed pilot research projects that will be conducted as collaborative efforts with the Faculty and with respect to the pilot projects, the metrics used to evaluate the outcomes of the research and; the significance of the Lived Experience Consultant Panel and how it will be integrated into the workings of the Virtual P-TERC.

After programmatic review, the applications recommended for funding were sent to the Commanding General, USAMRDC, for approval.