

Maximising the value of peer + review and decision-making in research funding allocation



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Research on Research



Peer review and decision-making

Peer Review is integral to the decision-making process in funding allocation but what do we mean by **peer review**?

- **External peer review**
- **Internal peer review**
- **Different types of peer reviewers**

Peer review provides an independent assessment for quality, impact and return of investment. It is the gold standard, undisputed champion of decision-making.

However, peer review is complex and large bodies of evidence suggest challenges and uncertainties.



Flipping the grant application review process

Ivo D. Dinov  a,b,c,d

REVIEW

REVISED

What do we know about grant peer review in the health sciences? [version 2; peer review: 2 approved]

Susan Guthrie  1, Ioana Ghiga¹, Steven Wooding  2

Peer review of health research funding proposals: A systematic map and systematic review of innovations for effectiveness and efficiency

Jonathan Shepherd , Geoff K. Frampton, Karen Pickett, Jeremy C. Wyatt

Peer Review or Lottery? A Critical Analysis of Two Different Forms of Decision-making Mechanisms for Allocation of Research Grants

Lambros Roubanis

The evidence

Despite the large body of evidence on peer review, there are a lack of studies identifying novel or innovative approaches

- The evidence is limited
- Methodologically weak
- Lack of clarity to determine the components of an efficient decision-making system
- Lack of experimental studies to show what an effective decision-making system is

- Key features of an optimal system are relatively unknown

“Researchers look to peer review to uphold research standards and promote the ‘best’ science, whilst politicians and funders use it to provide accountability for spending.” (Guthrie *et al*, 2018)

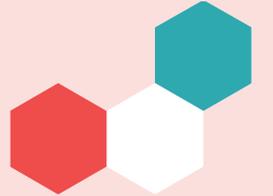


What works for whom, where and in what context? What and where are the gaps?



Aims and purpose

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH NEEDED? - There is a lack of evidence and a number of uncertainties around how to sustain an efficient decision-making system to support the allocation of research funding.



Peer review is only one aspect of a much larger system working towards fairness, reliability, and validity.

The whole research community would significantly benefit from a more open, fair and efficient decision-making process in the allocation of research funding.

To build the evidence base to maximise the value of peer review and its contribution to decision-making in research funding allocation (for funders, reviewers and researchers).



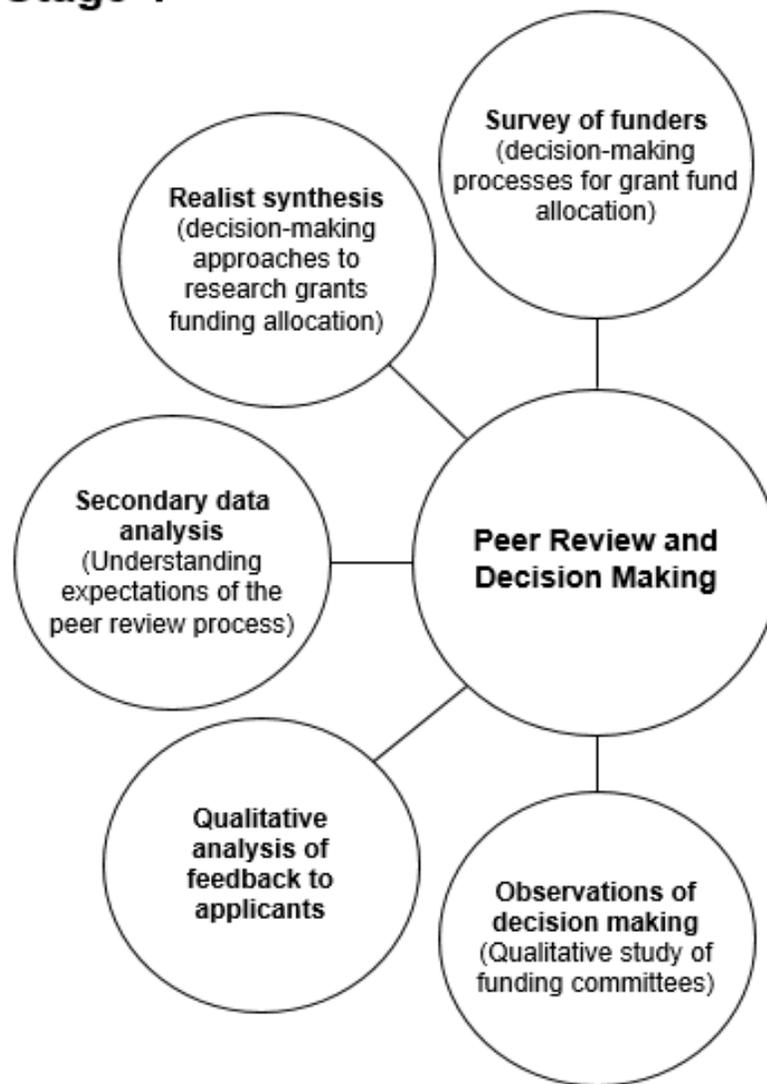
Methods

- Reviewing the literature
- Mixed methods
- Retrospective analysis
- Prospective analysis



Theme One: Peer review and decision-making

Stage 1



Stage 2

- eDelphi to identify alternative approaches
- Feasibility study of an alternative approach

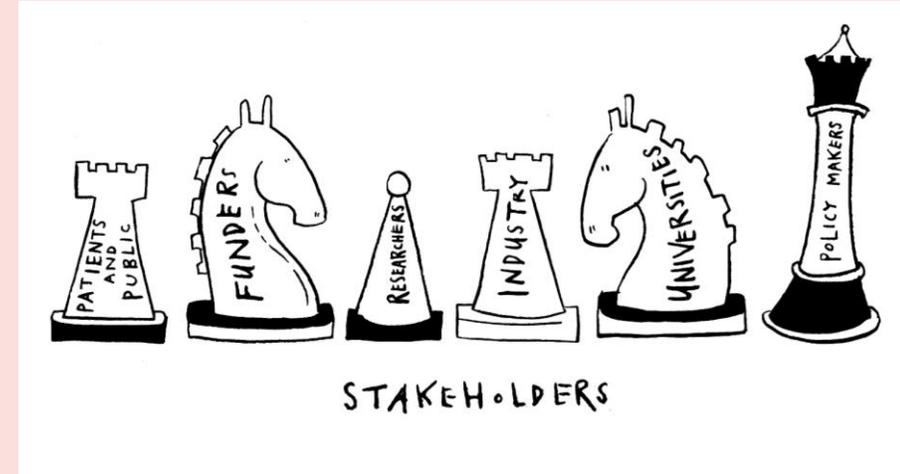


- Surveys
- Interviews
- Observations

Stakeholder Engagement

Engagement with stakeholders is essential for the design and conduct of the research.

They are also participants in the research.



Why? Engagement with stakeholders will ensure ongoing relevance of the research AND the knowledge generated is useful to, and used by, stakeholders.

Outputs, Outcomes and Impact

Building the evidence base for strategies of decision-making for research funding that has international relevance.



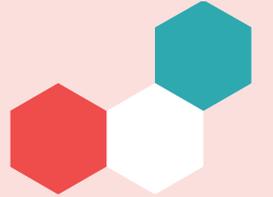
How? Research outputs such as peer reviewed articles, reports, conference submissions.



Engagement activities to raise awareness of the work with all stakeholders including the research and funding communities. Promote key messages using webinars, blogs and social media such as Twitter.

Outputs, outcomes and Impact

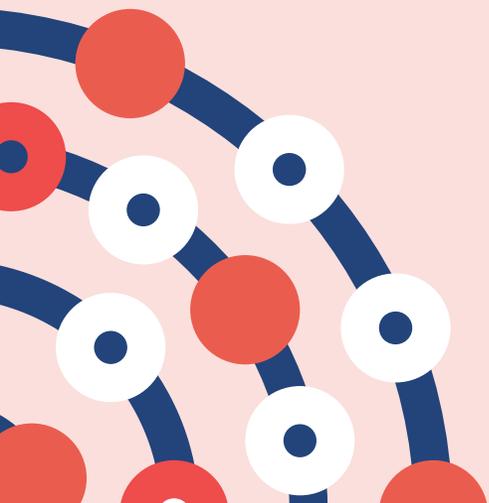
To have proportionate research management processes for the allocation of funding – *not one size fits all*



Seek greater clarity and understanding around funders decision-making processes from a funders perspective

Anticipated impact

- Opportunities for funders to consider enhancements to the process,
- Enhanced transparency and openness around decision-making,
- Greater acceptability of streamlining processes,
- Reduction in duplication of effort (and cost),
- Improved quality of applications and
- Increasing the potential value of peer review for funders, reviewers and applicants (reducing burden).



Acknowledgements

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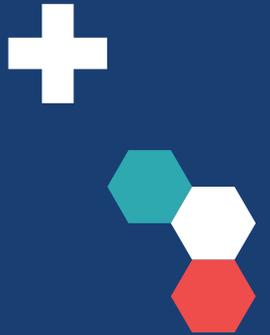
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"Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success."
Henry Ford.



NIHR RoR publications and blogs:

<https://www.southampton.ac.uk/netscc/research/publications.page>

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blog/why-innovation-is-key-to-improving-peer-review-quality/22178>

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blogs/peer-review-can-we-do-it-better/20087>

<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/blogs/nihr-research-on-research-the-what-why-how-and-who/11358>



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