

## **TRANSCRIPT FOR: REVIEW PROCESS FOR TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH AWARD APPLICATIONS**

**JOHN BOWERS:** HELLO, I'M THE SCIENTIFIC REVIEW OFFICER FOR THIS YEAR'S TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH APROCESS, AND IN FACT, THE PRIOR THREE YEARS AS WELL. I'M GOING TO GIVE YOU AN OVERVIEW OF PROCESS THAT WE DO TO REVIEW THESE. ONE OF THE IMPORTANT THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND IS THAT EARLY ON WHEN THIS PROGRAM WAS SET UP, IT WAS NOT ONLY A DIFFERENT KIND OF APPLICATION, BUT ALSO A DIFFERENT KIND OF REVIEW PROCESS. I THINK THE BASIC TAKE HOME LESSON YOU GET FROM THE REVIEW SIDE IS THAT IT'S REALLY SET UP AS A REVIEW BY A SMALL NUMBER OF DISTINGUISHED SCIENTISTS. THAT WAS PART OF THE DESIGN PARAMETERS.

SO, FOR THIS INITIATIVE, WE HAVE AN EDITORIAL BOARD REVIEW. DURING THE FIRST STAGE OF THE REVIEW, WE IDENTIFY APPLICATIONS WITH THE HIGHEST TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL. THEN IN THE SECOND STAGE, WE GET MAIL REVIEWS FOR THE APPLICATION THAT HAS THE HIGHEST AND THEN THE THIRD STAGE IN A FACE-TO-FACE MEETING.

LET'S GO INTO DETAILS. IN STAGE ONE, WE'RE IDENTIFYING THE MOST MERITORIOUS APPLICATIONS. IN THIS STAGE, EVERY APPLICATION HAS FIVE EDITORS ASSIGNED TO IT. THERE ARE FIVE LOOKS ASSOCIATED WITH EACH APPLICATION. THE MAIN FOCUS IS ON THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL AND THE INNOVATION. EACH OF THE EDITORS INDEPENDENTLY SUBMIT A SCORE OF 1 TO 9 FOR EACH APPLICATION THEY'RE ASSIGNED TO, AND ABOUT 70% OF THE APPLICATIONS THAT GO FORWARD IN TO THE NEXT STAGE ARE SEELCTED BASED ON THE BEST AVERAGE SCORE. GENERALLY, WE'RE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING LIKE TWO TO THREE TIMES AS MANY APPLICATIONS AS NEEDED. SO THAT'S KIND OF HOW WE TRY TO GET THE CUT OFFS. ABOUT 70% OF THE APPLICATIONS THAT GO TO THE SECOND PHASE OF REVIEW ARE BASED ON EDITOR'S SCORE. THE OTHER 30% OF THE APPLICATIONS THAT GO FORWARD ARE DONE THROUGH INDIVIDUAL EDITOR'S SELECTING SPECIFIC APPLICATIONS. SO WE REFER THIS AS A "WHITE BALL" WHICH IS THE OPPOSITE OF A "BLACK BALL." EACH EDITOR CAN SELECT UP TO 2 APPLICATIONS TO GO FORWARD THAT AREN'T IN THE GROUP WITH THE BEST AVERAGE SCORING. THE REASON WE DO THIS IS TO TRY AND GET AWAY FROM, I GUESS, THE TYRANNY. WE'RE TRYING TO INCLUDE SOME CONTROVERSIAL WORK, RECOGNIZING THAT IF SOMETHING IS TRULY TRANSFORMATIVE, NOT EVERYONE IS GOING TO AGREE THAT IT'S TRANSFORMATIVE, AND THAT APPLICATION MAY NOT DO WELL BASED ON AN AVERAGE SCORE. SO FIVE PEOPLE AREN'T GOING TO ALL THINK IT'S THE BEST. SO THAT'S HOW THE OTHER ONES COME TOGETHER. WE HAVE OUR GROUP GOING FORWARD. WE THEN GO TO THE SECOND STAGE OF THE REVIEW.

IN THE SECOND STAGE OF REVIEW, WE GET INPUT FROM SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS. THE FIRST STAGE IS ALL ABOUT THE EDITORS ACTING AS GENERALISTS. THE SECOND STAGE IS MAIL REVIEWS FROM OUR POOL OF SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS. SO THE APPLICATIONS THAT ARE IDENTIFIED FIRST GET SENT OFF FOR MAIL REVIEW. TO DO THIS, WE ACTUALLY GIVE THE APPLICATIONS TO THE VARIOUS PARTS OF CENTER FOR SCIENTIFIC REVIEW THAT IDENTIFIES THE REVIWERS. I'M NOT THE ONE WHO GOES OUT AND GETS ALL THESE REVIEWERS. WE GET THREE MAIL REVIEWS PER APPLICATION. THOSE MAIL REVIEWS THEN GO BACK TO THE EDITORS, AND THE EDITORS GET ROUGHLY A MONTH BEFORE OUR FACE-TO-FACE MEETING, WHICH IS OUR LAST STAGE.

DURING THE LAST STAGE OF THE MEETING, WE FIRST HAVE A FORMAL VOTING ON 75 APPLICATIONS THAT WE WILL DISCUSS, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE MANY, MANY MORE THAT ARE NOT DISCUSSED. THEN WE GO THROUGH AND DISCUSS THE APPLICATIONS. THERE ARE FOUR EDITORS ASSIGNED TO EVERY APPLICATION AND WE DISCUSS ALL OF THE APPLICATIONS. THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TRANSFORMATIVE RESEARCH AWARD REVIEW AND A CONVENTIONAL STUDY SECTION REVIEW. IT IS REALLY A SMALL GROUP OF EDITORS WHO ARE DISTINGUISHED SCIENTISTS WHO ARE RECRUITED AS GENERALISTS. SMALL MEANING, I THINK THE FIRST YEAR WE HAD 11 REVIEWERS, LAST YEAR 13, THIS YEAR WE'LL HAVE A FEW MORE THAN THAT BECAUSE WE'RE EXPECTING A FEW MORE APPLICATIONS THAN IN THE PAST. THESE EDITORS DO NOT WRITE ANY CRITIQUES. IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO DO SO. THE VERY FIRST YEAR, EACH EDITOR LOOKED AT SOMETHING LIKE THREE HUNDRED APPLICATIONS. IMAGINE. IMAGINE TRYING TO WRITE A CRITIQUE FOR EACH APPLICATION. IT JUST DOESN'T WORK. THE EDITORS DON'T WRITE CRITIQUES -- THEY SIMPLY SCORE. THE SUMMARY STATEMENTS ARE FOR THE DISCUSSED APPLICATIONS: THEY HAVE A RESUME AND SUMMARY THAT I WRITE. THE SUMMARY STATEMENTS DO NOT DISCUSS THE APPLICATION, THEY DON'T HAVE ANY CRITIQUE. THEY HAVE, INSTEAD, AN OVERVIEW OF THE REVIEW PROCESS WHICH IS A LITTLE BIT SIMILAR TO WHAT I JUST WENT OVER. THE OTHER DIFFERENCE IS THAT HIGH-RISK IDEAS ARE DEFINITELY GOOD IN THIS. SOMETHING THAT IS A GOOD, BUT NOT RISKY IDEA, IS PROBABLY BETTER FOR A CONVENTIONAL RO1 APPLICATION FORMAT. ON THE BUDGET SIDE, ASK FOR WHAT YOU NEED AND JUSTIFY IT. REVIEWERS ARE NOT AFRAID OF BIG BUDGETS. I THINK MUCH OF THE BUDGET PICTURE THAT RAVI PRESENTED EARLIER, IT'S WHAT'S BEEN REQUESTED AS OPPOSED TO WHAT'S BEEN APPROVED. SO THAT'S IT FOR MY PRESENTATION.