

cycle. Each set of reviews is assigned a chairperson to govern the review process. The majority of the peer reviewers are non-ARS scientists. Peer review panels are convened to provide in-depth discussion and review of the research project plans. Each panel reviewer receives information on 1–25 ARS research projects.

A total of about 220 research projects are reviewed annually by an estimated 100 reviewers; whereby approximately 200 are reviewed by panel and approximately 20 are reviewed by an ad hoc process. The organization and management of this peer review system, particularly panel reviews, is highly dependent on the use of forms.

The Office of Scientific Quality Review will seek OMB approval of the following forms:

1. Confidentiality Agreement Form—USDA uses this form to document that a selected reviewer is responsible for keeping confidential any information learned during the subject peer review process. The Confidentiality Agreement is signed prior to the reviewer's involvement in the peer review process. This form requires an original signature.

2. Panelist Informational Form—USDA uses this form to gather up-to-date background information about the reviewer. Reviewers often include sensitive information on this form. This form requires an original signature.

3. Peer Review of an ARS Research Project Form (Peer Review Form)—USDA uses this form to guide the reviewer's comments on the subject project. The form contains the reviewing criteria and space for the reviewer's narrative comments and evaluation.

4. Recommendations for ARS Research Project Form—(Recommendations Form, formerly known as "Critique Form") USDA uses this form to guide the panel's evaluation and critique of the review process. The form contains recommendations for the subject research project.

5. Panel Expense Report Form (Expense Report)—USDA uses this form to document a panel reviewer's expense incurred traveling to and attending a peer review meeting. The Expense Report includes lodging, meals, and

transportation expenses. When completed, the form contains sensitive information.

Panel Invoice Form (Invoice)—USDA uses this form to document the transfer of a stipend to a peer reviewer. Reviewers receive stipends as compensation for serving as peer review panelists. This form requires an original signature.

(1) USDA's collection of information on the Confidentiality Agreement Form is needed to document that a selected reviewer is responsible for keeping confidential any information learned during the subject peer review process. The Confidentiality Agreement would be signed prior to the reviewer's involvement in the peer review process.

(2) USDA's collection of information on the Panelist Informational Form is needed to gather up-to-date background information about the reviewer. It contains sensitive information.

(3) USDA's collection of information on the Peer Review Form is needed to guide the reviewer's comments on the subject project. It contains the reviewing criteria and space to insert comments.

(4) USDA's collection of information on the Recommendations Form is needed to guide the panel's critique of the review process. It contains recommendations for the subject research project.

(5) USDA's collection of information on the Expense Report Form is needed to document a panel reviewer's expenses incurred by attending a peer review meeting. The Expense Report includes lodging, meals, and transportation expenses. It includes sensitive information.

(6) USDA's collection of information on the Invoice is needed to document the transfer of a stipend to the peer reviewer. The stipend is given to reviewers as appreciation for their time spent on the panel review process.

Estimate of Burden: The burden associated with this approval process is the minimum required to achieve program objectives. The information collection frequency is the minimum consistent with program objectives. The following estimates of time required to complete the forms are based on OSQR's

experience in working with reviewers and accepting their input into our procedures.

1. Confidentiality Agreement Form: This form takes 10–15 minutes to complete. It only requires a signature and date, but the reviewer must read the terms of the agreement.

2. Panelist Informational Form: This form takes 20–30 minutes to complete. It resembles a typical application for personal information, many reviewers provide the same data to become grant reviewers.

3. Peer Review of an ARS Research Project Form (Peer Review Form): This form takes 4–6 hours to complete. Because this is a review, the page length significantly varies. Reviewers are free to write as much as they wish.

4. Recommendations for ARS Research Project Form (Recommendations Form, formerly known as "Critique Form"): This form takes 1 hour to complete. Because this is a review, the page length significantly varies. Reviewers are free to write as much as they wish.

5. Panel Expense Report Form (Expense Report): This form takes 10–15 minutes to complete.

6. Panel Invoice Form (Invoice): This form takes 5–10 minutes to complete. This form has the reviewer's personal info pre-filled and the reviewer only verifies it's accuracy and signs.

Respondents and Estimated Number of Respondents: Scientific experts, currently working in the same discipline as the research projects under review, are selected to review research projects. These experts are notable peers within and external to the ARS. Annually, about 100 peer reviewers complete these forms. However, ad hoc reviewers are not paid a stipend, and they do not travel to meet with other reviewers; and thus will not complete Expense Report and Invoice Forms. These ad hoc reviewers, retained for special situations, will make up about a quarter of all the reviewers retained annually.

Frequency of Response:

Form	Number of respondents	Annual frequency
Confidentiality Agreement	100	1 per respondent.
Peer Review Forms (Required for all reviewers and they have 1–4 review assignments on average).	100	~4 per respondent (Total of 400).
Expense Report, Invoice, & Panelist Information Forms	75	1 per respondent for each form (Total of 225).
Recommendations Form (Required on panel reviews, whereby comments from the peer review form are combined into one file).	75	~2.5 per respondent (Total of 200).