

IMI2 JU INDEPENDENT OBSERVER'S REPORT

Call ID: H2020-JTI-IMI2-2015-08-single-stage

IMI2 8th Call for Proposals 5th cut-off date

Date of evaluation: 12-13 April 2018

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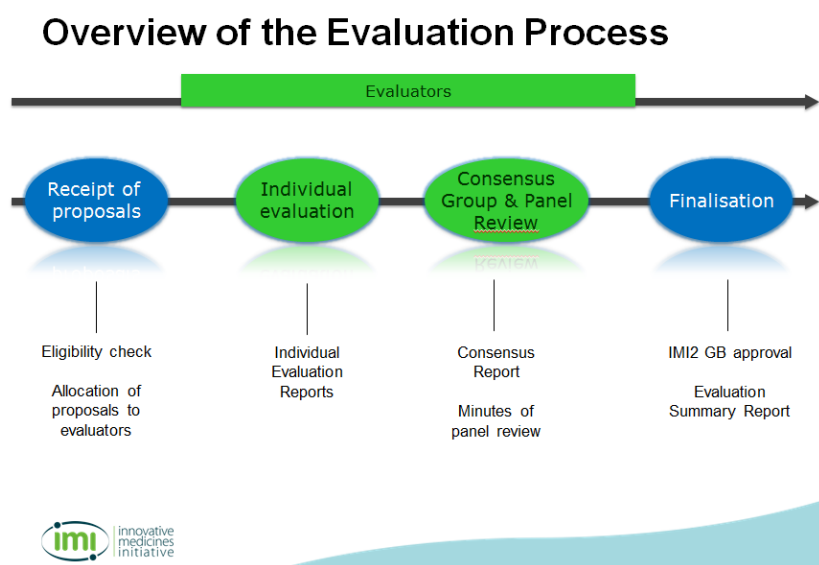


IMI2/INT/2018-01103

1. Introduction and approach taken by the observer

This report provides the findings of the Independent Observer following completion of the Consensus Panel meeting of the 5th cut-off date of IMI2 Call 8 held in Brussels the 12th and 13th April 2018. This 5th cut-off date under the Ebola+ programme was a single stage call.

The overview of the evaluation process is illustrated in the next graph:



Four proposals were submitted in response to this cut-off date of IMI2 Call 8. and remotely evaluated over a two week period prior by 5 Independent Experts (IE) from 5 different countries and with different and complementary backgrounds. The meeting of the panel review was held at IMI premises.

All eligible proposals were discussed during the panel review to assess their merit with respect to the pre-defined evaluation criteria relevant to the Call.

In compliance with the IMI2 evaluation rules, an independent observer (IO) was invited to follow all the evaluation process.

An on-site briefing for IEs took place before the panel session, with an overview of the process and the obligations of both the IE and the IMI Team as a whole, being set out very clearly by the Head of Scientific Operations.

The on-site briefing was also the opportunity for the IO to get introduced to the Independent Experts.

The on-site evaluation and review process was conducted in accordance with the plan set out during the briefing, and the meeting ran smoothly in line with the pre-defined Agenda.

In addition, all relevant information was made available to the IO in different forms: email with relevant links, a set of key documents linked together in a paper document was provided, a set of documents including CVs of experts on an USB key handed out at the beginning of the meetings. This was timely and useful information to the IO.

In execution of its task the Observer took the following approach:

- Spoke individually with all the IEs and several IMI employees. These included the Scientific Officers who acted as moderators, the supporting Secretariat and IMI lawyers.
- Examining aggregated comments of the remote individual evaluation reports of the experts, Consensus reports and Panel reports.
- Being present during the panel meeting following the progress of the evaluation, observing the discussion among the independent experts, IMI2 staff and see the functioning of the SEP tool.
- Having informal discussions during the lunch and coffee breaks with experts and rapporteurs.

2. Overall impression

The implementation of the procedures, including the IT-tool SEP, was efficient, reliable and user-friendly

All proposals were treated equally and were evaluated on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants. Particular care was taken both by experts and IMI2 moderators to impartiality and fairness of the evaluation. Experts were of a high quality with all required relevant expertise. Consensus was reached by the experts on the scoring and comments of all proposals. The Consensus Evaluation Reports were drafted with active participation of all independent experts. Discussions were fair and transparent.

The IO observed that the IMI2 is following the evaluation procedures published in the IMI2 Manual for submission, evaluation and grant award ¹.

The quality of the IMI2 JU evaluation process in comparison with the evaluation procedures of national and/or other international research funding schemes is excellent. **The IO observed that IMI2 was following a set of core principles for good practice in peer review that are European Gold Standards:**

Excellence: for each proposal, the excellence of the proposals was based on the assessment performed by high quality experts.

Impartiality: All proposals were treated equally and were evaluated on their merits, irrespective of their origin or the identity of the applicants.

Transparency: Decisions and scoring were based on clearly described rules during the on-site briefing; the procedures that were published in the public applicants guide and evaluators guide and that were present on wall posters in the panel room. As for one stage evaluation the scoring includes thresholds for two out of three items the discussion were quite hard.

Confidentiality: All proposals and related documents have been treated in confidence by experts and IMI2 staff involved in the process. Particular attention was taken not to leave documents (proposals or evaluation reports) unattended in an empty office.

Conflict of interest: As management of conflicts of interest is crucial for ensuring equity and integrity in peer review, and to preserve the credibility of the process, IMI2 distinguish conditions that would automatically disqualify an expert, and those that may be considered requiring the assessment of IMI lawyers. The prevention and management of conflicts of interest was already assessed before the panel meeting. Before the panel meeting discussion started all IEs were invited by the moderator to confirm the absence of any

¹ https://www.imi.europa.eu/sites/default/files/uploads/documents/apply-for-funding/call-documents/imi2/IMI2_ManualForSubmission_v1.6_October2017.pdf

conflict of interest and, where relevant, to disclose any other situation which deserve to be known by the other member of the panel.

In conclusion, the well-defined evaluation procedures, the high scientific level of IEs and the skilled Scientific Officers supported by a very competent staff allowed the proposals to benefit of an outstanding quality assessment

3. Summary of Recommendations

The overall opinion is that the evaluation process was carefully and fairly implemented, of excellent quality and conformed to international standards of peer review.

All IEs were not involved in any applicant consortia and were not subject to any kind of conflict of interest.

As for one stage evaluation the scoring includes thresholds for two out of three items the discussion were quite hard and some IEs indicated that the threshold of 4 for criterion 1 and 2 is too high.

All IEs took an active role in the discussion held during the Panel meetings and drafting of the final Evaluation Summary Reports. The consensus reports were formulated from an in-depth discussion.

The evaluation was supported by the IMI2 staff in a very professional way. The evaluation involved important logistics preparation of the meetings (travels, hotel booking, printing evaluation reports, call documents, applicant proposals, IT system etc..). No complaint of any expert was expressed.

It should be emphasized that the IMI2 assessment procedures have reached a very high level of quality directly connected to the expertise, professionalism and competence of its employees.