

# Understanding the efficacy of misoprostol-only compared to mifepristone and misoprostol regimens for medication abortion

## Proposal review guide

### Background

This funding opportunity seeks to further the evidence base on the efficacy of misoprostol-only medication abortion in the US.

### Overview of the selection process

Proposals will be reviewed by clinicians, scholars, and partners who bring content expertise and have a vested interest in abortion research. The selection process is as follows:

- Reviewers will evaluate proposals based on a predefined set of criteria (shown on the following page) and make recommendations for funding to the Society.\*
- Each proposal will be reviewed by three reviewers. We expect that it will take around four hours to review each proposal.
- The Society and the funder of these grants will discuss funding recommendations. In consultation with the funder, we will make a decision about the final number of grants to be awarded. We anticipate supporting one research project via this funding opportunity.
- Written feedback from reviewers will be anonymized and shared verbatim with applicants.

*\*If needed based on the slate of proposals, the Society will conduct a secondary peer-review process with a subset of reviewers to evaluate some or all proposals more in-depth.*

## Reviewer instructions

Before getting started:

- Read through the [request for proposals](#) to gain an understanding of the purpose and focus of the funding opportunity.
- Log in to the [online review platform](#) and review proposal assignments.
- Contact staff immediately regarding any conflicts of interest, so that the proposal can be reassigned to a different reviewer.
- Complete the [conflict of interest form](#).

## Rating system

Your role as a reviewer is to evaluate and score each proposal on four domains (methods, impact, team, and budget and period of support) and provide a recommendation for funding.

Please use the following 9-point scale to assess each of the scored domains. It is important that the full scale be used and the same conventions applied in all reviews. The scores will be one component among a collection of considerations that will be taken into account when determining which proposals will be funded.

| Score | Descriptor   | Additional guidance on strengths and weaknesses     |
|-------|--------------|---|
| 1     | Exceptional  | Exceptionally strong with essentially no weaknesses |
| 2     | Outstanding  | Extremely strong with negligible weaknesses         |
| 3     | Excellent    | Very strong with only some minor weaknesses         |
| 4     | Very good    | Strong but with numerous minor weaknesses           |
| 5     | Good         | Strong but with at least one moderate weakness      |
| 6     | Satisfactory | Some strengths but also some moderate weaknesses    |
| 7     | Fair         | Some strengths but with at least one major weakness |
| 8     | Marginal     | A few strengths and a few major weaknesses          |
| 9     | Poor         | Very few strengths and numerous major weaknesses    |

*Minor weakness:* An easily addressable weakness that does not substantially lessen potential value of the project.

*Moderate weakness:* A weakness that lessens potential value of the project.

*Major weakness:* A weakness that severely limits potential value of the project.



## Review criteria

All proposals that are eligible for the funding opportunity will be reviewed according to the below criteria:

### Methods (70%)

The Society seeks to fund a methodologically sound and rigorous project.

- Is the proposed analytical approach appropriate to answer the research question(s) in a rigorous and scientifically sound way?
- Does the team provide sufficient detail on how efficacy and, if applicable, any other outcomes will be defined and measured?
- Does the team describe a clear and feasible strategy for the collection of individual-level data after participants receive medications?

### Impact (10%)

The Society seeks to fund a project that is positioned to produce empirical evidence with a clear, concrete, and strategic path to recommendations for clinical practice, health service delivery, and/or other structures that support access to medication abortion.

- Is it clear how the results of the proposed project will be used and to what end?

### Team (10%)

The Society seeks to fund a project where the team composition is an asset to the project, including teams that bring together individuals with diverse skill sets, backgrounds, and perspectives. The Society also prioritizes study teams that elevate the expertise and skills of Black and Indigenous researchers and researchers of color.

- Does the team have the skills, experience, and background required to carry out the proposed project?
- Does the positionality (eg, the social and political context that creates your identity in terms of race, class, gender, sexuality, and ability status) of the team and its effect on the proposed project's design, feasibility, and impact contribute to the potential success of the project?

### Budget and period of support (10%)

The Society seeks to fund a project of up to \$915,000 that can be completed within 24 months of award.

- Is the budget fully justified and appropriate in relation to the proposed project?
- Is it feasible to complete the project within 24 months?

The following list of words has been compiled to help reviewers write evaluative comments.

## Strengths

## Weaknesses

|                         |                   |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Comprehensive .....     | Partial           |
| Justified .....         | Unjustified       |
| Reasonable .....        | Unreasonable      |
| Appropriate .....       | Inappropriate     |
| Detailed .....          | Broad             |
| Exhaustive .....        | Limited           |
| Adequate .....          | Inadequate        |
| Thorough .....          | Careless          |
| Focused .....           | Unfocused         |
| Complete.....           | Incomplete        |
| Unique .....            | Common            |
| Extensive.....          | Limited; narrow   |
| Provides evidence ..... | Lacks evidence    |
| Innovative .....        | Outdated          |
| Qualified .....         | Unqualified       |
| Strong .....            | Weak              |
| Experienced .....       | Inexperienced     |
| Demonstrates .....      | Conceals          |
| Describes .....         | Fails to describe |
| Feasible .....          | Impossible        |
| Specify .....           | Does not specify  |
| Convincing .....        | Unconvincing      |
| Presents .....          | Fails to present  |

## Approaches to review

There is no single approach to the review process, but consider the following:

- Complete an initial read-through of each proposal in order to get a sense of the proposals as a group and their organizational structure.
- Return to each proposal, re-read, and begin reviewing.
- Revisit all applications as a whole after scoring as a strategy for checking the tendency to score the first few applications more critically than later ones.
- Review highly and poorly scored proposals twice to ensure fairness.

## Writing reviews

Useful reviews are clear and concise, use respectful and non-inflammatory language, and include justification.

Consider the following best practices:

- Use bulleted points or short narratives to make succinct, focused comments.
- Make evaluative statements rather than summarizing the proposal.
- Be as specific as possible.
- State why a particular issue is a weakness so that the applicant will know how to improve in that area.
- Use comments to illustrate scores.
- Ensure comments and scores are aligned.
- Assist the applicant in strengthening, refining, redirecting, or further focusing their work by providing concrete suggestions, where appropriate.