Peer Reviewer

Job Aid Reference Guide

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How to Use this Guide

The purpose of this Job Aid Reference Guide (JARG) is to detail the processes used by Peer Reviewers to perform the following:

- Open Assessment Case
- Print Application
- Complete Initial Review
- Back, Close, Save, Continue
- Complete Edits to Change Requested Applications
- View Application
- Review Solicitation
- Print Assessment
- Complete Final Review

This guide is part of a larger training resource library that includes self-guided eLearning videos and infographics. All training resources are accessible on the JustGrants Training & Resources page.

Linked Content

Home This JARG utilizes a chapter-linked Table of Contents. A link is included on each page to help the user quickly return to the Table of Contents by selecting the Home icon located in the bottom left corner.

IMPORTANT

- The system **does not** auto save work.
- A warning message displays after ten (10) minutes of inactivity (per security requirements).
- Users are automatically logged out if they are inactive for 15 minutes (per security requirements).
- Unsaved work **will not be** saved at logout.

Peer Reviewer Assessment Overview

Peer Reviewers perform two types of application reviews: Initial and Collaboration.

Initial Review - The Peer Reviewer reviews an application against the solicitation criteria. The Peer Reviewer completes the scores and enters comments for strengths and weaknesses into each assessment.

Collaboration Review - Once the initial assessments are completed, Peer Reviewers on the panel convene in a collaboration session to discuss the applications. After the session, each reviewer submits their final scores in JustGrants and finalizes the strengths and weaknesses comments. Not all solicitations go to collaboration review. The strengths and weaknesses are provided to the applicants not awarded once awards are made by OJP. Awarded applicants may ask for their peer review summaries.

NOTE: NIJ provides all applicants peer reviewer summaries.

Purpose of Peer Review Assessment

The Peer Reviewer completes the initial scores and comments for strengths and weaknesses, which are entered into the assessment.

Then, the Peer Reviewer completes the final scores after the collaboration session and finalizes the strengths and weakness.

The strengths and weaknesses are provided to the applicant once awards are made. Note that not all solicitations or applications go to collaboration review.

Peer Reviews are assessed using one of three scoring formats:

Qualitative

The Peer Reviewer selects an overall rating of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended.

Quantitative

The Peer Reviewer selects a numeric score from 0 to 10 for each criterion.

Hybrid

The Peer Reviewer selects both a numeric score from 0 to 10 for each criterion and an overall rating of Highly Recommended, Recommended, or Not Recommended.

Assessment Status Codes

Initial Assessment Status Definitions

- **Pending-AssessmentInitialReview** - The Peer Reviewer is working on completing the assessment status.

- **Pending-InitialReviewCompleted** - The Peer Reviewer has submitted the assessment.

- **Pending-ChangeRequest** - The assessment has been returned to the Peer Reviewer for edits.

Collaboration Assessment Status Definitions

- **Pending-CollaborationReview** - The assessment is in the Peer Reviewer's worklist to be completed.

- **Pending-FinalReviewCompleted** - The assessment has been submitted by the Peer Reviewer.

- **Pending-ChangeRequest** - The assessment has been change requested to the Peer Reviewer to make changes.

Open Assessment Case

Open Assessment Case

Steps 1 - 2

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.
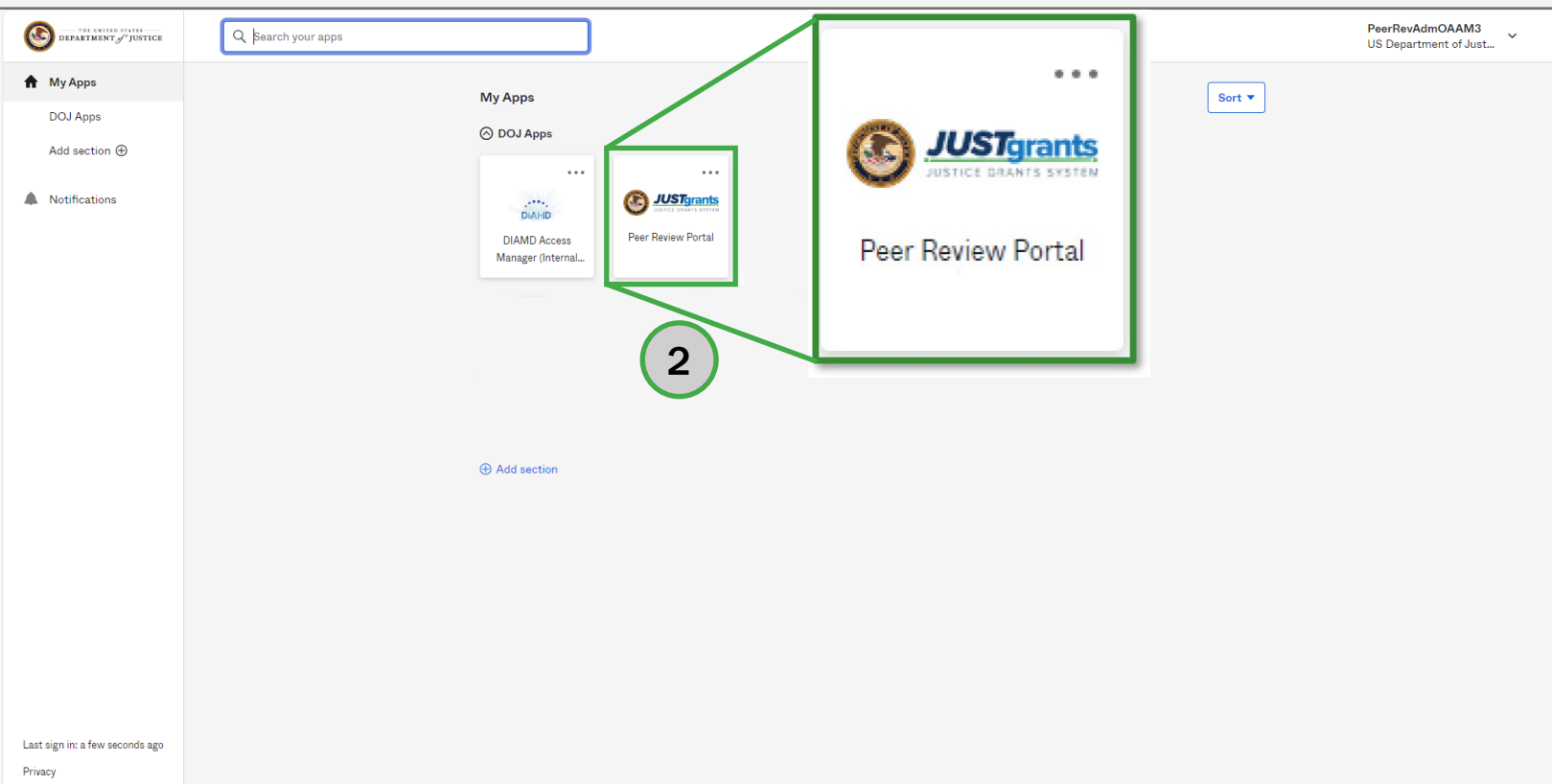
Open Assessment Case

Step 3

Locate the assessment to open from the **My Worklist** section.

3) Select the **Case ID** for the assessment case to review.

NOTE: Columns can be filtered or sorted.

To filter:
- Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ⧩ ;
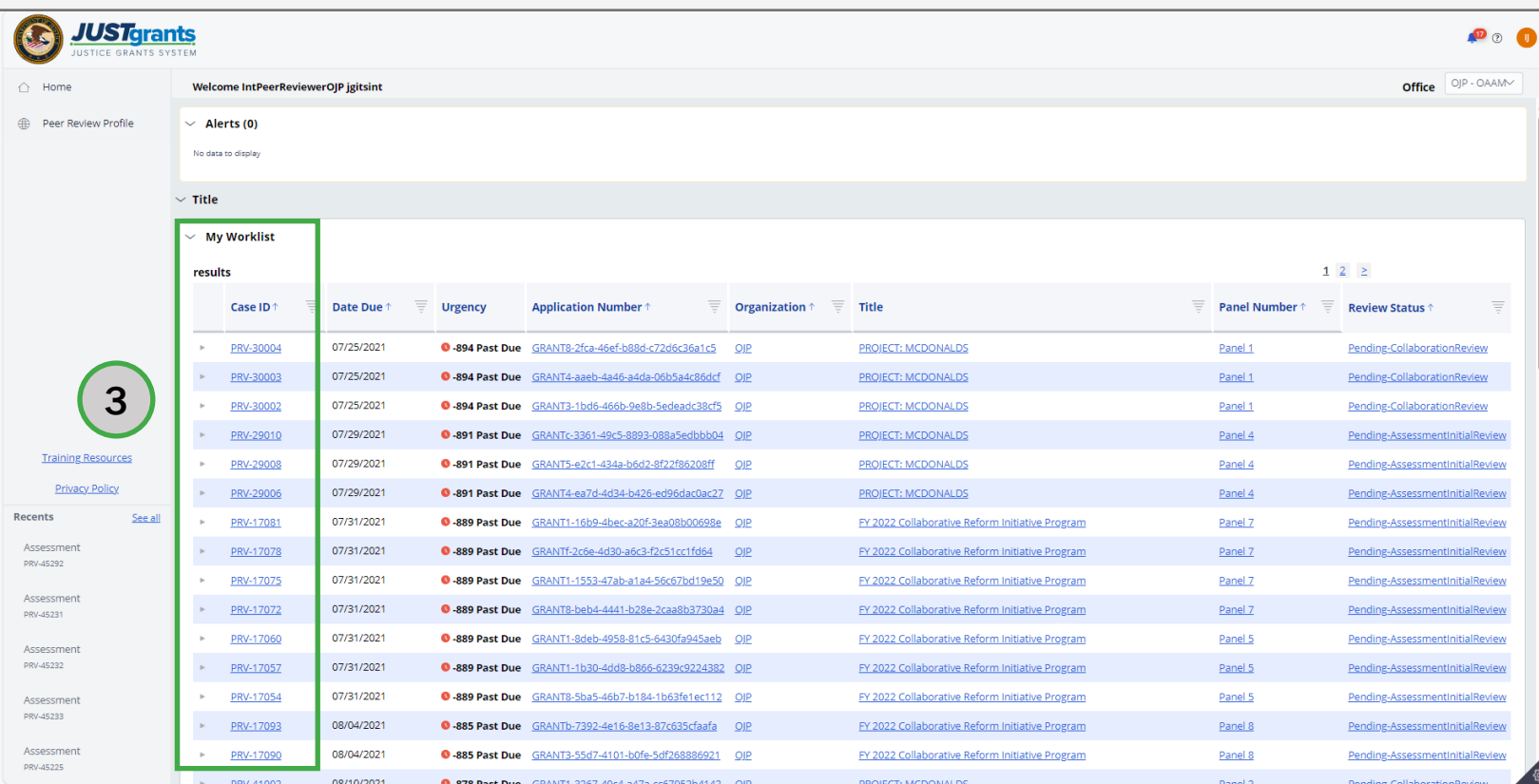- Select the **checkbox** or type in text to search to select **Assessment;**
- Select the **Apply** button.

To Sort:
- Select the **Small** arrow ⬆ or select the title of the column header.

4) Review the **Information Header** at the top of the screen. The header will include:

-   Application Number (GRANTXXXXXXX)

-   Solicitation Title

-   Project Title

-   Applicant Name Case ID

-   Initial Review or Final Review Due Date

NOTE: For any questions regarding the peer review process, contact the **Collaboration Coordinator** indicated in the header.

At the bottom of the assessment screen, below the Initial Review Fields, are the following buttons:

- **Comments Text Box** – Only add a comment in the comment text box if responding to a question from the Collaboration Review Coordinator. **Generally, this is used if the Assessment is returned, or change-requested for editing.**

- **Close** – Close the assessment and return to **My Worklist** on the Home screen. A confirmation screen will appear that allows comments to be saved by selecting the **Save** button before the screen closes. Save all work before exiting.

- **Save** – Save edits made to scores, ratings, strengths, and weaknesses.

- **Continue** – Save edits made to scores, strengths, weaknesses, then advances to the next assessment screen.

View Application

View Application

Steps 1 - 2

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.
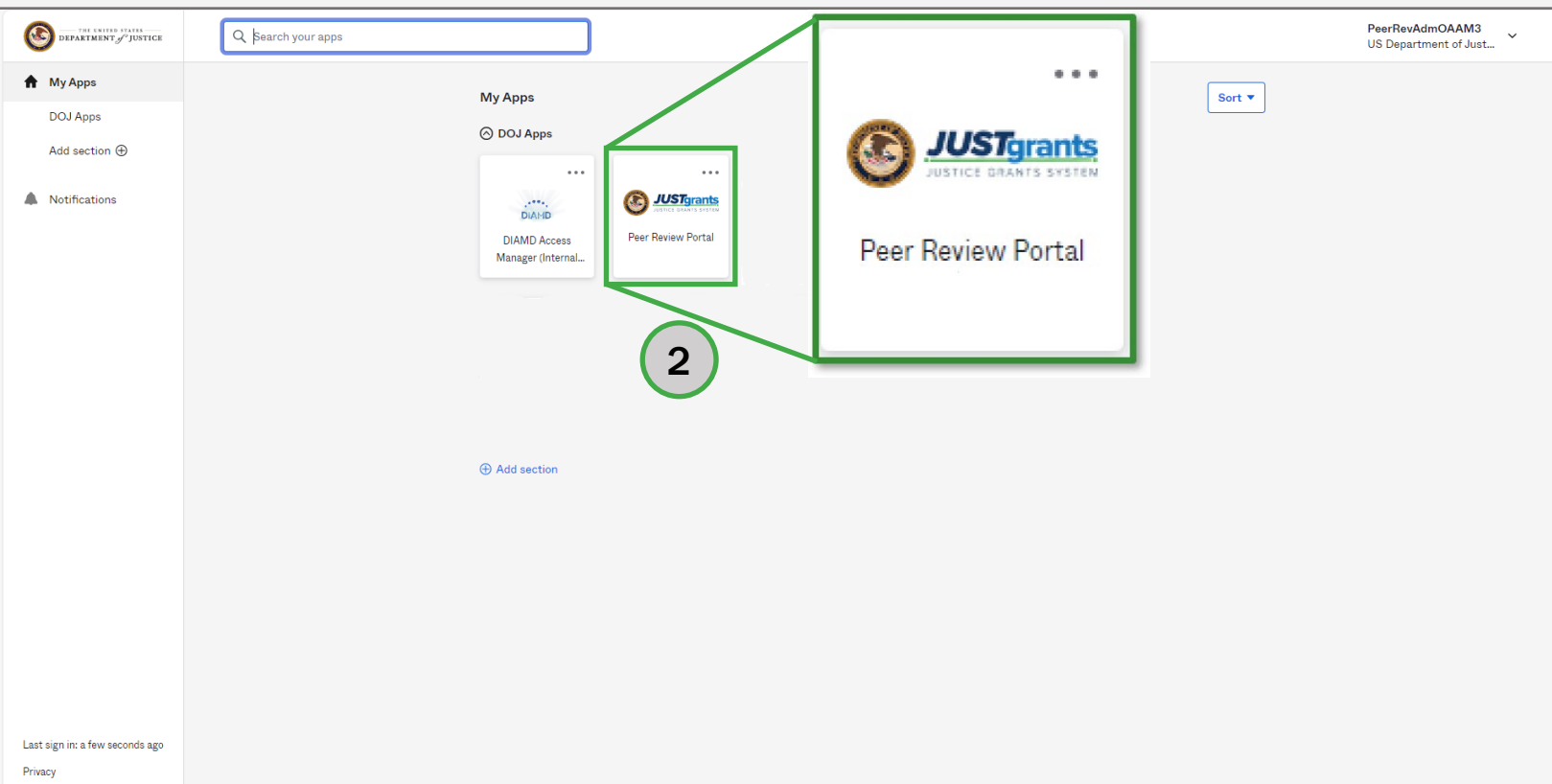
Select
Assessment
Case ID

3) Select the application **Case ID** to open the **Assessment** case.

NOTE: Columns can be filtered or sorted.

To filter:

- Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ⬚;
- Select the **checkbox** or type in text to search to select **Assessment**;
- Select the **Apply** button.

To Sort:

- Select the **Small** arrow ⬆ or select the title of the column header.

View Application

Step 4

4) Select the **View Application** button in the bottom right frame to open a new window to view the application.

NOTE: The **Peer Reviewer** can view a read-only PDF version of the solicitation and the application attachments by selecting the **Download Solicitation** button and the **Download Application Attachments** button in the bottom right frame.

NOTE: The function to download application attachments does not include web-based forms (e.g., budget, abstract). Printing web-based forms is discussed in the **Printing Application** section.

Select Expansion Carets

5) Select the caret (>) to expand each subsection to view the webforms.

6) Select the **Attachment** links to download and view a copy of the application attachment file.

NOTE: For easier viewing, it is recommended to select the caret (>) next to each subsection to collapse the section header while moving down the list.

7) Select the caret to expand the **Budget and Associated Documentation** section, which will open to the **Budget Summary Table** that features a summary of the budget.

NOTE: For easier viewing, it is recommended to select the caret (>) next to each subsection to collapse the section header while moving down the list.

8) Scroll down and select the caret to the individual budget categories in **Budget Detail Summary View** to view budget details and narratives.

9) Select the caret to expand the specific budget category section to find each year's budget details and narrative information (e.g., Personnel, Fringe, Travel, etc.).

NOTE: If a specific budget category is blank, funds were not requested for that category. If there is no budget, notify the Panel Lead so that they can provide the Reviewer with additional guidance.

Print Application

Print Application

Steps 1 - 2

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.

Print Application

Step 3

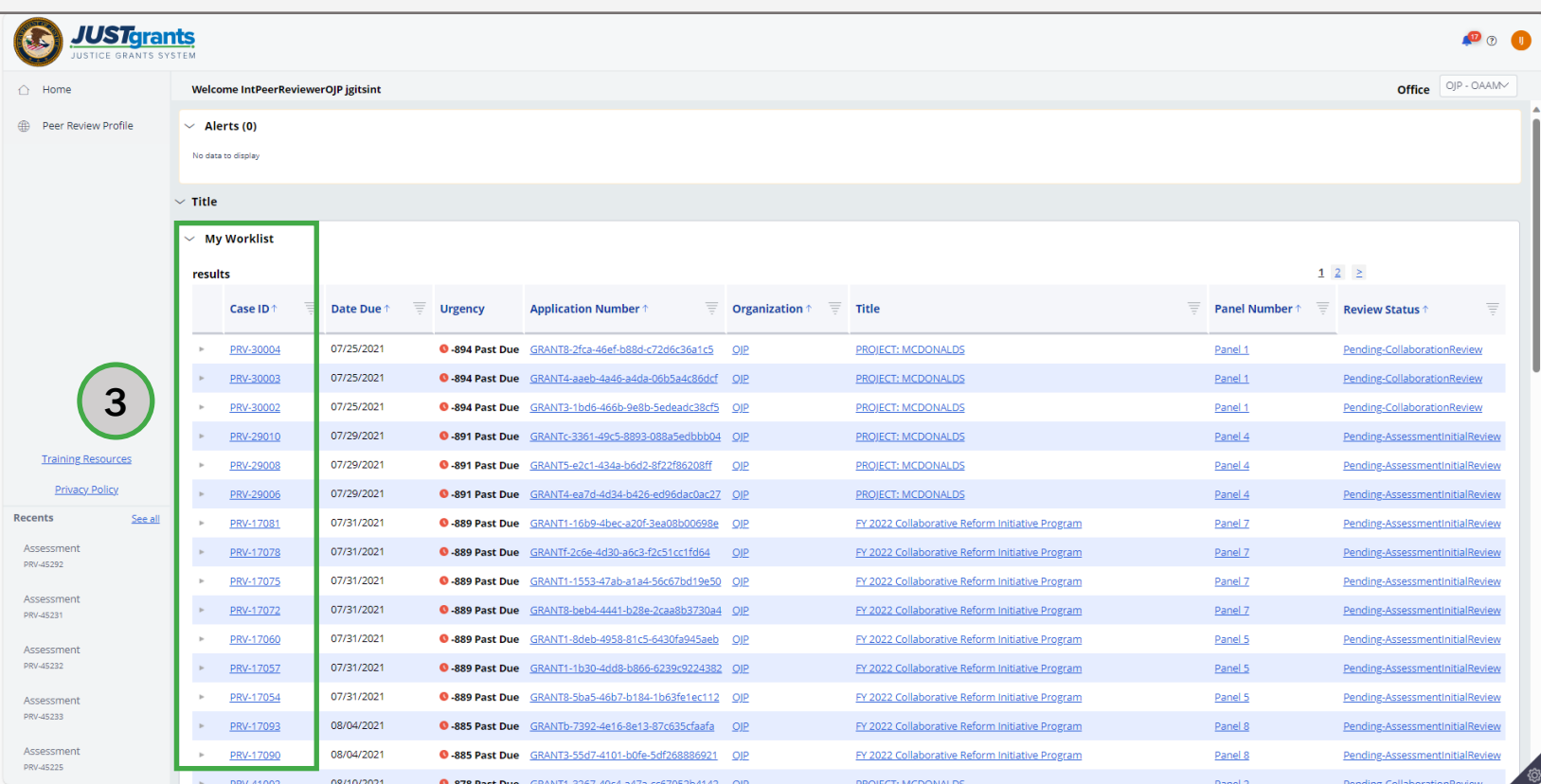3) Select the application **Case ID** to open the **Assessment** case.

NOTE: Columns can be filtered or sorted.

To filter:

- Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ☰ ;
- Select the **checkbox** or type in text to search to select **Assessment;**
- Select the **Apply** button.

To Sort:

- Select the **Small** arrow ⬆ or select the title of the column header.

Print Application

Step 4

4) Select the **View Application** button in the bottom right frame to open a new window to view the application.

Home

Print Application

Step 5

5) Click on the caret **(>)** to expand each subsection to view the webforms.

Print Application

Step 6

6) Select **Ctrl + P** to open the print window.

Print Application

Step 7

7) Scroll down and select the **More Settings** option from the print window.

Print Application

Steps 8 - 9

8) Set the scale percentage to 70. This will allow for all information to fit across the printed paper.

9) Select the **Print** button to print the application.

Home

Print Application

Steps 10 - 11

10) Select an attachment link to download and view the attachment.

11) Select **Ctrl + P** to open the print window and follow print instructions from previous page.

NOTE: Another way to view attachment is by opening each caret of the grant package and the attachments will be visible in for the sections that have an attachment. Select the attachment to open.

Review Solicitation

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.

Review Solicitation

Step 3

3) Select the application **Case ID** to open the **Assessment** case.

> **NOTE:** Columns can be filtered or sorted.
>
> To filter:
> - Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ▽ ;
> - Select the **checkbox** or type in text to search to select **Assessment**;
> - Select the **Apply** button.
>
> To Sort:
> - Select the **Small** arrow ⬆ or select the title of the column header.

Review Solicitation

Step 4

4) Select the **Download Solicitation** button in the bottom right frame.

Review Solicitation

Step 5

5) Select **Open File** option from the box in the upper right of the screen to open a read-only PDF version of the solicitation.

Review Solicitation

Step 6

6) Select the **X** option on the PDF tab to close the document and return to the **Assessment** page.

NOTE: Review all sections of the solicitation to understand the requirements related to the funding opportunity associated with the assessment. The solicitation should serve as guidance when providing both quantitative and qualitative responses in the assessment.

Initial Review

Initial Review Overview

What is Peer Review?

Peer Review is a **fair, transparent, and objective process** of reviewing competitive discretionary grant applications.

Program Office (PO) leadership uses the results from the Peer Review process as guidance when selecting applications for awards.

Why is Peer Review Conducted?

For competitive grants or cooperative agreements, unless prohibited by federal statute, **the federal awarding agency must design and execute a merit review process** for applications.

When are Peer Reviews Conducted?

Peer reviews are conducted once applications are received and prior to awards being processed.

Who are Peer Reviewers?

Peer Reviewers are **independent subject matter experts** (SMEs) who are qualified by their education, training, and experience to evaluate grant and cooperative agreement applications for OJP awards.

Initial Review Key Concepts

- If the solicitation is using qualitative scores, the peer reviewer will only insert comments into the **Strength and Weakness** text box in the assessment.

- The peer reviewer must insert at least one **strength** or **weakness** for each criterion.

- Based on the score assigned, both strengths and weaknesses may need to be documented. However, if there are no strengths to document, enter **"None noted"** in the **Strength** text box. If there are only strengths to note, then enter **"None noted"** in the **Weakness** text box.

- Be advised that the quality of written comments is very important. Peer Reviewers should provide specific details about why the application did or did not satisfy the selection criteria.

- Feedback is **critical** not only to aid DOJ in their funding decision process, but also to applicants seeking guidance on how to prepare stronger grant submissions in the future.

- Press **Save** to save work frequently.

- Generally, there will be at least five (5) criteria within an assessment to complete.

Quantitative Scoring Overview

The following table outlines how scores are defined in JustGrants. This information should be used only as a **guide** on how to evaluate the applications. The definitions provided in the table should not be used in lieu of well-written assessment comments that are specific to each applicant's proposals.

The scoring breakdown table may be used by Peer Reviewers as a recommended guide to develop their own scoring rubric/methodology. Methodology should be consistent across applications:

10-9	Excellent

- Many major and minor strengths identified; few, if any weaknesses and no major weaknesses. Highest probability and confidence that the solicitation requirements will be met, with a majority of the requirements exceeded.

8-7	Good

- A significant number of major and minor strengths, no more than a couple minor weaknesses, and no major weaknesses identified. High probability and confidence that the solicitation requirements will be met, with some of the requirements exceeded.

6-5	Acceptable

- Few if any major strengths, a few minor strengths, no more than a couple minor weaknesses and no major weaknesses identified. Acceptable probability that the solicitation requirements will be met.

4-3	Minimally Acceptable

- No major strengths, few if any minor strengths, several minor weaknesses and one or more major weaknesses identified. Low probability that the solicitation requirements will be met.

2-0	Unacceptable

- No strengths but many minor and major weaknesses identified. Extremely low probability that the solicitation requirements will be met.

Home

Quantitative Scoring Key Concepts

Assess the Application against the Solicitation Requirements

While reading each application, think about how well the applicant responded to the key components of the solicitation. Assess each application against the solicitation; do not compare applications to one another.

Justify Numerical Scores

Award and deduct points based on the selection criteria in the Program Announcement and Reviewers' Checklist. Use a consistent scoring methodology for each application.

Score Applications Consistently

When developing a scoring methodology, establish a framework for evaluations. Carefully and consistently apply the scoring methodology equally to all applications. If a timeline that met all the requirements was worth two points for one application, it should be worth the same two points for every application.

Quantitative Scoring Key Concepts (cont.)

Take Time to Locate Information in Applications

Although the Program Announcement provides guidance on where applicants should place required information, some applicants do not follow the directions. Remember that applicants are not always experienced grant writers. Award some points if the required information is found somewhere in the submission.

Perfect Score

A **perfect score of a 10** indicates that the applicant responded to all requirements. Perfect scores must include comments that reflect strengths and that details on how the applicant successfully addressed all requirements of the selection criterion. Weaknesses should not be noted.
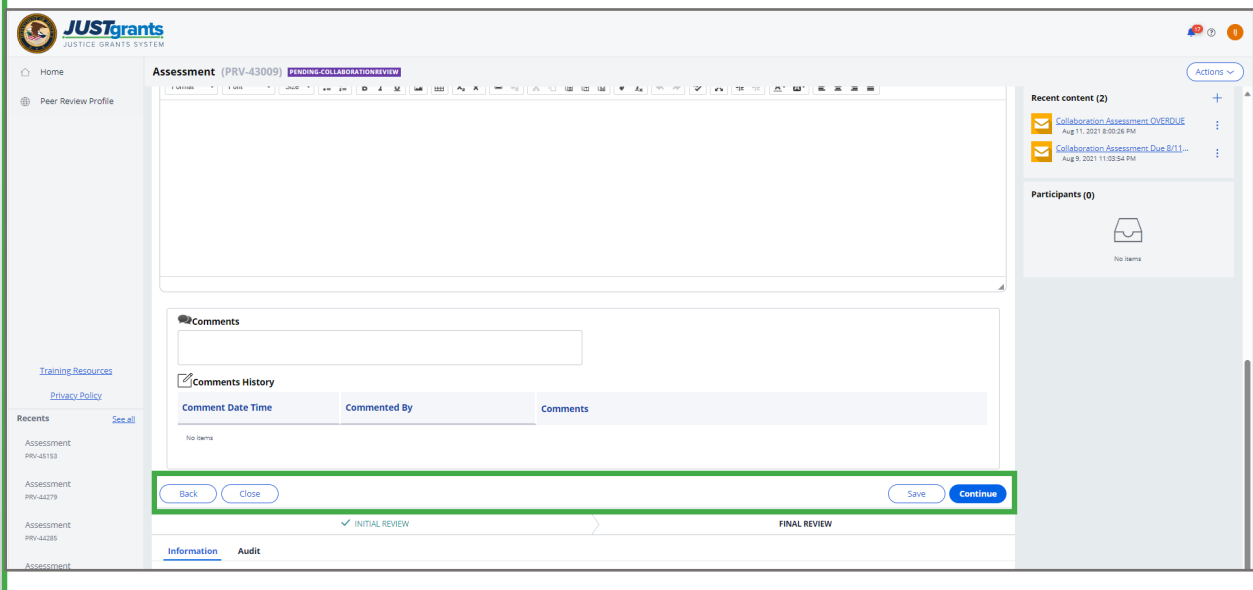
Poor Score

A **score of zero** indicates the applicant failed to respond to any of the requirements for that criterion. Descriptions must include details about several weaknesses or one significant problem. For a score of zero for a criterion, strengths should not be included for that criterion.

Assessment Page Buttons Overview

The following buttons appear at the bottom of the Assessment page.

- **Back** – Returns the reviewer to the previous page and saves any edits made to Scores and Strengths and Weaknesses.

- **Close** – Takes the reviewer back to My Worklist. A confirmation screen will appear to allow the reviewer to save the comments by selecting the Save button before the page closes. Do not exit without saving.

- **Save** – Save edits made to Scores, Ratings, and Strengths and Weaknesses.

- **Continue** – Takes the reviewer to the next assessment criterion page and saves edits made to Scores and Strengths and Weaknesses.

Home

Finish Initial Review

Steps 1 - 2

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.

3) Select an application **Case ID** from **My Worklist** to open an **Assessment** case in the **Pending-AssessmentInitialReview** status.

NOTE: Columns can be filtered or sorted.

To filter:

- Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ;
- Select the **checkbox** or type in text to search to select **Assessment**;
- Select the **Apply** button.

To Sort:

- Select the **Small** arrow or select the title of the column header.

Finish Initial Review

Steps 4 - 6

4) Select each criterion in the **right navigation** menu. Review the criterion and solicitation requirements to assist in evaluating the application.

5) Select a numeric score (0 – 10) from the **Initial Quantitative Score** dropdown box if using quantitative scoring.

6) Insert strengths and/or weaknesses comments in the **Strength** and **Weakness** text boxes. All numerical scores must be supported with comments.

NOTE: The criteria will match the criteria outlined in the solicitation. Generally, there will be at least five (5) criteria within an assessment to complete.

Home

Finish Initial Review

Steps 7 - 9

7) Select the **Summary** option from the **right navigation** menu.

8) Select one of the ratings from the **Initial Qualitative Score** drop down box if using qualitative ratings:

   • Highly Recommended;

   • Recommended;

   • Not Recommended.

9) Enter overall strengths and/or weaknesses in the **Strength** and **Weakness** text boxes. Provide a few brief sentences that assess the quality of the application in its entirety and the applicant's chance of being successful in meeting solicitation requirements.

NOTE: Do not copy and paste each individual criteria comment or every strength and weakness into the Summary section.

Finish Initial Review

Steps 10 - 13

10) Review the scores and/or ratings.

11) Select the **Submit Assessment** option from the **right navigation** menu.

12) Select the **Print** function from the **Actions** drop down menu to print or save the assessment to the reviewer's desktop if satisfied with the assessment.

13) Select the **Submit** button.

NOTE: The assessment cannot be printed or viewed after selecting the **Submit** button. If there are errors, a message will display at the top of the page showing that a score or text is missing from the **Strength** or **Weakness** text box. Use the menu at the right to navigate to and correct the error.

Finish Initial Review

Steps 14 - 15

14) If no errors appear, a message will display at the top of the page stating, **"Thank you for your input."**

15) Select the **Close** option from the **Actions** drop down menu to close the assessment and return to the **Assessment** page.

Print Assessment

Print Assessment

Step 1

Before submitting the assessment, the Peer Reviewer can print a hard copy of the assessment or save a soft copy on their computer for discussion reference during the collaboration session.

1) Select the **Print** option from the **Actions** drop down menu.

Print Assessment

Steps 2 - 3

2) Select the **Print Destination** from the **Printer** dropdown menu and set the scale percentage option to 70.

3) Select the **Print** button.

Select Save Option

To save a soft copy of the assessment onto a computer, use the same **Print** option from the **Actions** dropdown menu; however, instead of using the **Print Destination** option:

4)   Select the **Save as PDF** option from the **Printer** dropdown menu.

5)   Select the **Save** button.

6) Select the **destination/location** for the assessment PDF document.

7) Choose a **name** for the assessment PDF document.

8) Select the **Save** button.
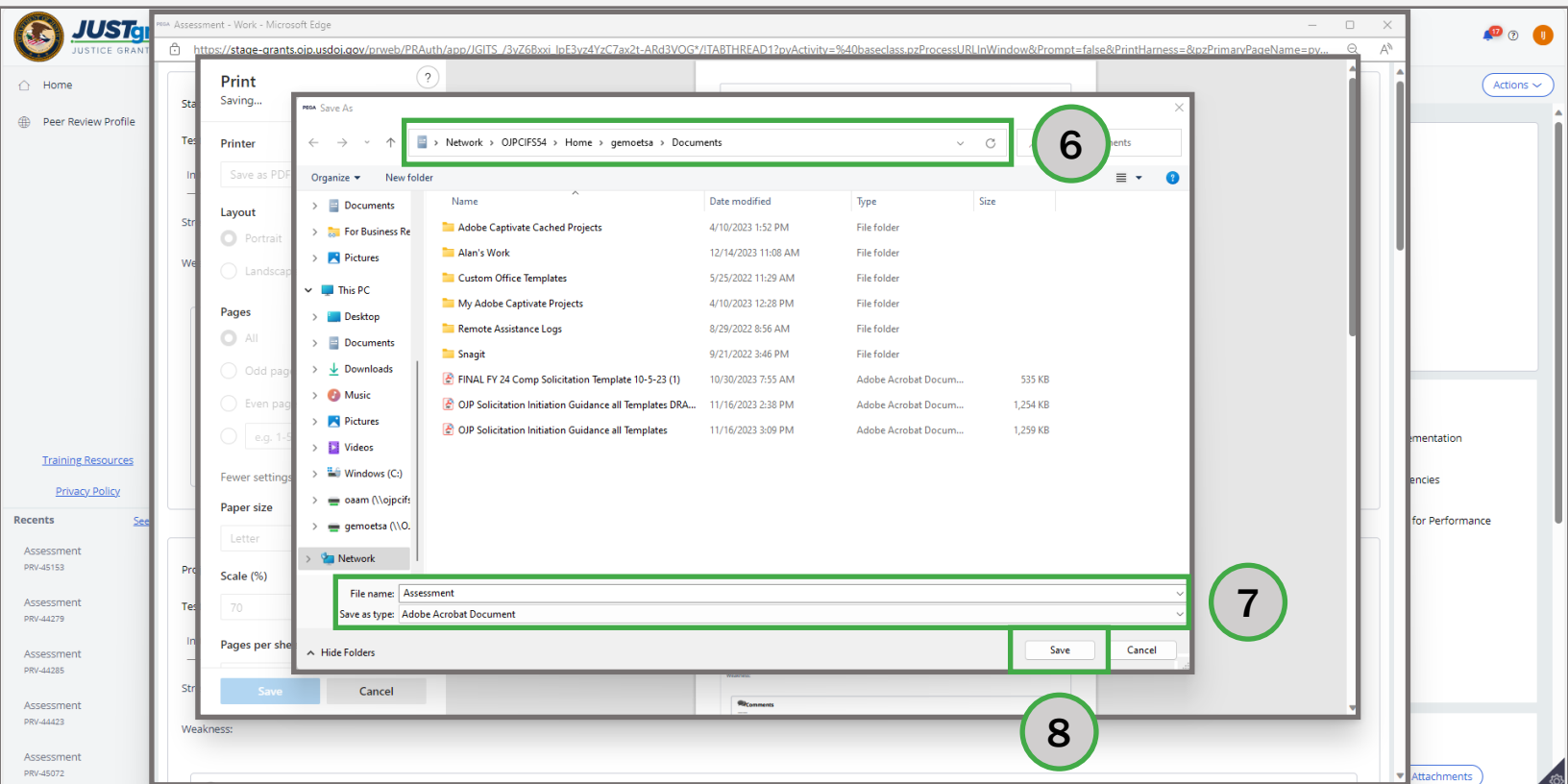
Collaboration Review

Collaboration Review Overview

Purpose of Collaboration Review

After the initial assessments are finished, Peer Reviewers on the panel will convene in a collaboration session to discuss the applications. After the session, each Peer Reviewer submits their final scores in JustGrants and finalizes the strengths and weaknesses comments. Not all solicitations go to collaboration review. The strengths and weaknesses will be provided to the applicant once awards are made by OJP.

Collaboration Preparation

The collaboration session is a teleconference or videoconference meeting where a panel of reviewers (with a facilitator and appropriate OJP staff) meet to discuss their ratings of assigned applications.

Scoring matrices, reviewer call tip sheet, and collaboration session information will be emailed 24-48 hours before the teleconference call.

Peer Reviewers should prepare for the collaboration session by going over the selection criteria where there are widely divergent scores. These sections are highlighted yellow in the scoring matrices.

Collaboration Review Overview (cont.)

Peer Reviewers should refresh their memory about their comments and be prepared to offer solid evidence (including application page numbers) to support their scores/comments.

Collaboration Session

After the facilitator discusses housekeeping rules, a discussion of applications and criteria that have widely divergent scores will occur. Based on the score threshold set by OJP for this grant program, all applications may not require discussion. For applications requiring discussion, only those criteria areas with widely divergent scores will be discussed based on the scoring variance guide set by OJP for this grant program.

If, because of the dialog during the collaboration session, the review decides to change their scores or comments, they should make notes and inform the facilitator when that application is discussed.

NOTE: JustGrants is open for peer reviewers at the beginning of the collaboration session, but only to access files or information as needed, not to update their assessments during the call.

Complete Final Review

Complete Final Review

Steps 1 - 3

After the collaboration session, the Panel Lead will notify the Peer Reviewer that JustGrants is available to update final scores and comments and finalize each assessment.

1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.

3) Select the assessment **Case ID** of the application in **My Worklist**. The assessment will be in **Pending – CollaborationReview** status.

Complete Final Review

Steps 4 - 5

4) Select the **Criteria** link from the right navigation menu.

5) Type directly in the Strength and Weakness text boxes to edit the Summary comments:

- The **Initial Quantitative Scores** and **Comments** will be prepopulated from the initial review.

- Select a different numeric value from the **Final Qualitative Score** dropdown menu to edit the Final Quantitative Score.

- Type directly in the **Strength** and **Weakness** text boxes to edit the strength and weakness comments.

NOTE: A review using only **Qualitative Ratings** will only include the strengths and weaknesses for each criterion.

Complete Final Review

Steps 6 - 7

6) Select the **Summary** link from the right navigation menu.

7) Type directly in the **Strength** and **Weakness** text boxes to edit the **Summary** comments.

NOTE: Select the **Final Qualitative** rating from the dropdown menu if **Qualitative Ratings** are being used.

Complete Final Review

Steps 8 -9

8) Select the **Submit Assessment** link from the right navigation menu.

   • Review scores and/or ratings.

   • Navigate to the **Criteria** section via the right navigation menu to make changes.

9) Select **Submit** button.

NOTE: If there are errors, a message will display at the top of the page indicating a score or text is missing from the **Strength** or **Weakness** text box. Use the menu at the right to navigate to and correct the error.

Complete Final Review

Steps 10 - 11

10) A message displays at the top of the page.

11) Select the **Close** option from the **Actions** drop down menu to close the assessment and return to the **Assessment** page.

Complete Edits to Change-Request Application

Complete Edits to Change-Request Application
Steps 1 - 3
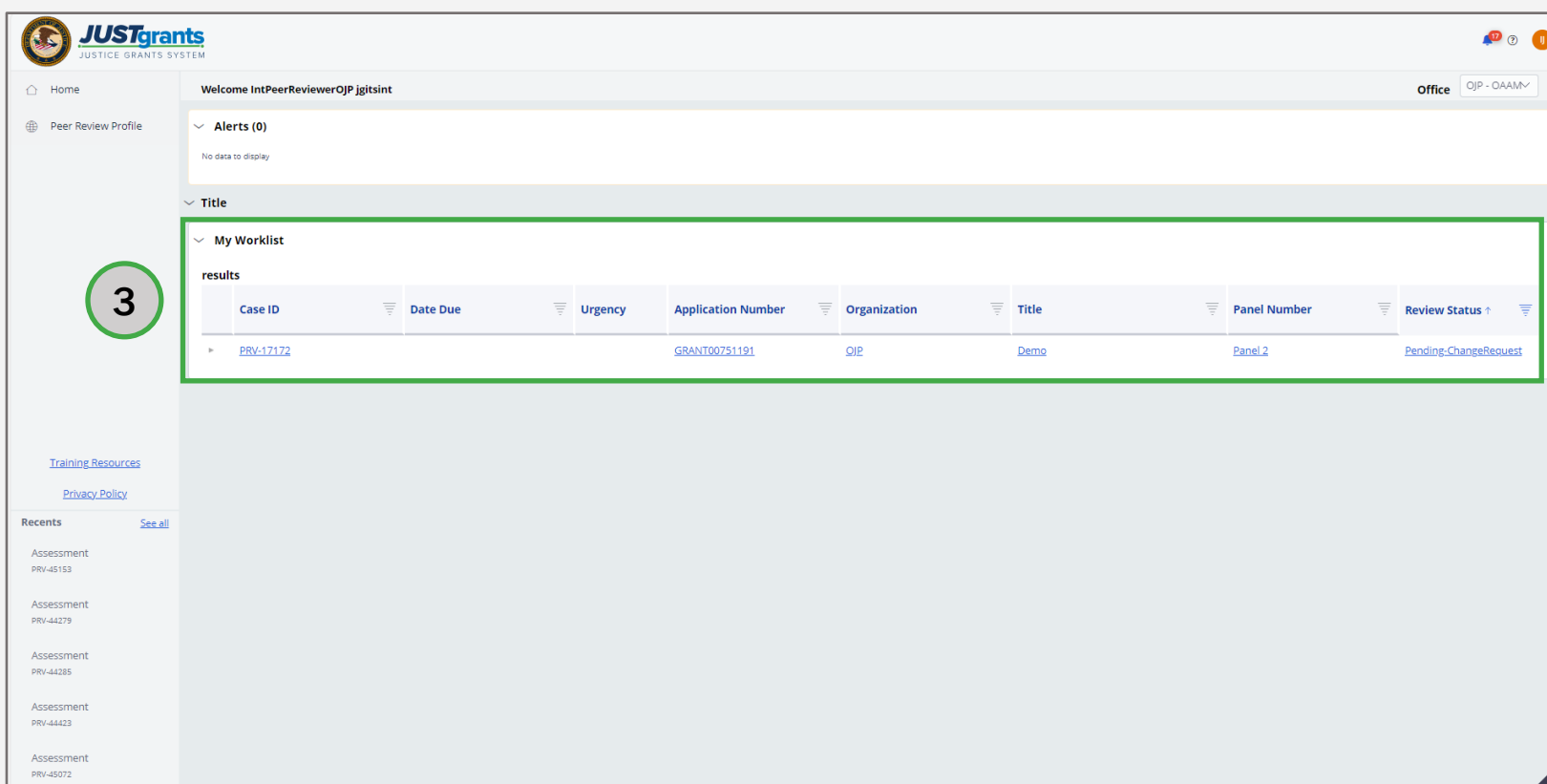
1) Log into **JustGrants** using the DIAMD home page: https://diamd-auth.usdoj.gov.

2) Select the **Peer Review Portal** icon.

3) Select the assessment **Case ID** of the assessment in **My Worklist**. The Assessment will be in **Pending – ChangeRequest** status.

NOTE: Select the **Upside-Down** arrow ▽ and select the **Apply** button to filter.

NOTE: Select the **Small** arrow ↕ or select the title of the column header to sort.

Complete Edits to Change-Request Application

Steps 4 - 5

4) Scroll to the bottom of the screen and check the **Comments History** for any directions by the Panel Lead at the bottom of the screen.

5) Follow the directions for completing the Panel Lead edits to the **Initial Review** or **Collaboration Review**.

- Select a different score or rating from the dropdown to edit scores and ratings.

- Type directly in the **Strength** and **Weakness** text boxes to edit strengths and weaknesses.

Complete Edits to Change-Request Application

Steps 6 - 9

6) Select the **Submit Assessment** link from the right navigation menu.

7) Review the scores and/or ratings.

8) Navigate to the **Criteria** section via the right navigation menu to make changes, if necessary.

9) Select the **Submit** button.

NOTE: If there are errors, a message will display at the top of the page indicating a score or text is missing from the **Strength** or **Weakness** text box. Use the menu at the right to navigate to and correct the error.

Complete Edits to Change-Request Application

Steps 10 - 11

10) If new errors are found, a message displays at the top of the page.

11) Select the **Close** option from the **Actions** drop down menu to close the assessment and return to the **Assessment** page.

Home

Appendix

Peer Review Glossary

Peer Review Glossary (A – C)

Assessment

The work that the reviewer submits for an application; can either be Initial or Final. A complete assessment generally includes both scores and narrative for all the solicitation criteria sections. To navigate to the assessment page for an application, the reviewer would need to click on the Case ID **PRV-XXXXX** in JustGrants.

AOT- Assignment of Task

This contract letter details expectations of the review, including but not limited to key dates and deliverables, and invoice/payment information. This contract is sent via email to each reviewer after the review has begun.

Case ID

The permanent, external identifier of an application's assessment in JustGrants denoted by the prefix (PRV-XXXXX).

Peer Review Glossary (C)

COI (Conflict of Interest)

The COI form that reviewers sign serves to certify that they do not have a relationship with the organization, or any individuals associated with an application. Reviewers must review applications for potential conflicts and submit their COI form as proof that the reviewer will not be biased for or against the applicant. Reviewers are required to disclose any potential conflicts. The Program Office will decide whether a conflict exists and if the reviewer will be allowed to review the application.

Collaboration

For peer review, reaching an actual agreement among peer reviewers is not essential. Each reviewer must be given the opportunity to share their initial assessment and scores as recorded in JustGrants and make amendments as warranted based on the discussion. Lasting variances in scores after discussion is acceptable.

Collaboration Session

A teleconference or web meeting where a panel of reviewers (with a facilitator and appropriate OJP staff) meet to discuss their ratings of assigned applications.

Peer Review Glossary (D – N)

DIAMD

Department of Justice's (DOJ) Digital Identity & Access Management Directory System (DIAMD). DIAMD is DOJ's digital system for managing identity and access to all grant-related applications and system for the Office of Justice Programs.

Individual Scoring Matrices

Scoring charts generated for each application that display each reviewer's individual scores for every criterion.

JustGrants

JustGrants is the web application and database used by the Office of Justice Programs for Reviewers to access and review applications. Peer review will be conducted electronically through OJP's Justice Grants System (JustGrants).

NDA (Non-Disclosure Agreement)

By signing this form, reviewers certify that they will not discuss their assigned applications outside of their work on the review panel.

Overall Scoring Matrices

A scoring chart generated to display each reviewer's overall, average score for every application on the panel.

Reviewer Checklist

A document designed to assist the reviewer in evaluating each application consistently and in accordance with the solicitation's selection criteria. The checklist includes areas where reviewers can add their scores and comments into sections for strengths and weakness of each criterion as it relates to the application. When finished with their evaluation, reviewers can then copy and paste their comments from the checklist directly into JustGrants.

Solicitation

The grant announcement posted by the Program Office for applicants to apply for grant funds. Most OJP solicitations are posted on Grants.gov. The solicitation is also included as an attachment in emails from the Panel Lead.

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JUSTgrants

JUSTICE GRANTS SYSTEM