

Issues to think about before you start – support

Who is best placed to provide support to public reviewers? It is likely to be someone who is managing the review process. That person needs to be clearly identified and their telephone number and email address made available to all peer reviewers. They also need to be properly resourced so they have sufficient time to provide support, and are able to refer people to other services if necessary. Valuable peer support can also be offered by other public reviewers.

Be proactive in offering support. This is especially important when people are new to reviewing. Ensure you've made it clear to public reviewers that they are welcome to call or email if they have anything they want to discuss.

Tailor the support to the public reviewers. Different people will have different support needs and these may change over time. You will probably need to provide more support to new reviewers, but this will tail off as people gain confidence in their skills.

People develop the skills for reviewing at different paces. If, after training, individuals haven't acquired the necessary skills or still aren't confident about doing a review on their own, think about how they could be supported by a more experienced lay reviewer.

Ensure grant applications are accessible. What do you need to do to provide plain English summaries of any applications or reports you use? Scientific abstracts alone may alienate people and/or undermine their confidence.