Supplemental Q&A Response

What happens at panel and how are decisions made there?

Donna Blackman: Review panels provide one form of advice that program managers consider as they evaluate the merits of a proposal. Panels, themselves, do not make any decisions; they indicate how the study comes across to a broader community than the experts who provided mail reviews comprise. (A subset of) panelists discuss each proposal for which decision is not already obvious to a program manager - strengths & weaknesses, the mail reviews (whether they agree, disagree, or think a reviewer misinterpreted). Program managers glean a lot from the discussion- a sense of how excited or not the broader group is, whether a reviewer concern is minor or major. As discussion ends, panelists score the proposal. After all proposals are discussed/scored, the list of relative scores serves as an aid to show relative (overall) merit amongst the suite of proposal considered. Again, this is advisory, not binding.