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## 2 C.F.R. § 1402.204

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### What are the merit review requirements for competitive awards?

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The requirements in this section apply to competitive grants and cooperative agreements unless otherwise authorized by Federal statute. Merit review procedures must be described or incorporated by reference in NOFOs (see 2 CFR part 200, appendix I, and 2 CFR 200.203). Pre-award considerations for both discretionary competitive and noncompetitive awards shall take into account the alignment of the award's purpose, goals, and measurement with the current DOI Government Performance and Results Act Strategic Plan including, the mission statement, vision, values, goals, objectives, strategies, and performance metrics therein, unless otherwise prohibited by statute.

- (a) *Competition in grant and cooperative agreement awards.* Competition is expected in awarding discretionary funds, unless otherwise directed by Congress. When grants and cooperative agreements are awarded competitively, DOI requires that the competitive process be fair and impartial, that all applicants be evaluated only on the criteria stated in the announcement, and that no applicant receive an unfair competitive advantage. All competitive funding announcements, and all modifications/amendments to those announcements, must be posted on *Grants.gov* ([www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)).
- (b) *Independent objective evaluation of financial assistance applications and proposals.* Bureaus and offices must conduct reviews of applications submitted in response to the announcement and for selecting applicants for award following established merit review procedures. Bureaus and offices must conduct comprehensive, impartial, and objective review of applications based on the criteria contained in the announcement by individuals who have no conflicts of interest with respect to the competing proposal/applications or applicants. Bureaus and offices must ensure reviewers are qualified, applications are scored on the basis of announced criteria, consideration is given to the level of applicant risk and past performance, applications are ranked, and funding determinations are made.

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