



Research Grant Proposal Review and Scoring Summary

Please direct all inquiries to grants@welch1.org

The Welch Foundation funds compelling research projects in fundamental chemical research, broadly defined, relying on investigators to define the scope and direction of their proposed work. Excellence in scientific thought and experimentation is the primary guide for funding decisions, evaluated across three areas:

Significance of Research. If successful, will the project advance chemical research through discovery and innovation? Given the current state of the field, is the work worth doing — and will success meaningfully advance the field, introduce new tools, or establish a new paradigm?

Rigor and Feasibility. Is the experimental approach scientifically sound, and does it increase the likelihood of success?

Expertise and Resources. Do the investigator's training, recent track record, and intellectual and physical environment support a credible path to success?

Each research grant proposal is reviewed by two members of the Welch Scientific Advisory Board (SAB). The reviewers are assigned based on the alignment of their expertise with the specific topic of the proposal. Each reviewer assigns a score, and the average of the two scores is used to rank proposals and guide discussion during the SAB review session. The scores and their implications are:

- 1 - **Outstanding.** Highly recommended for funding.
- 2 - **Excellent.** Recommended for funding if funds are available.
- 3 - **Very Good.** Revised proposal welcomed for consideration in the following cycle.
- 4 - **Good.** Substantive revision required.
- 5 - **Not Competitive.** Substantive revision required and decision to resubmit on the same topic dependent on nature of the deficiencies.
- 6 - **Not Competitive.** Revision and resubmission on the current topic not recommended.

Proposals with discordant scores, where the two reviewers differ by more than one point, are flagged by the review system. Each reviewer is notified and given the opportunity to revisit their review and revise their score, if appropriate. Discordant scores occur most often in the 3 to 6 range and rarely impact funding recommendations.

Each reviewer is also asked, in the event the proposal is not funded, whether the investigator should resubmit on the same topic or submit an entirely new proposal on a different topic. A recommendation to submit on an entirely new topic typically accompanies a score in the 4 to 6 range. The decision whether to revise the current proposal or submit a proposal on a new topic is left up to the investigator.

The figure below shows the score frequency distribution for all proposals over the past five years.

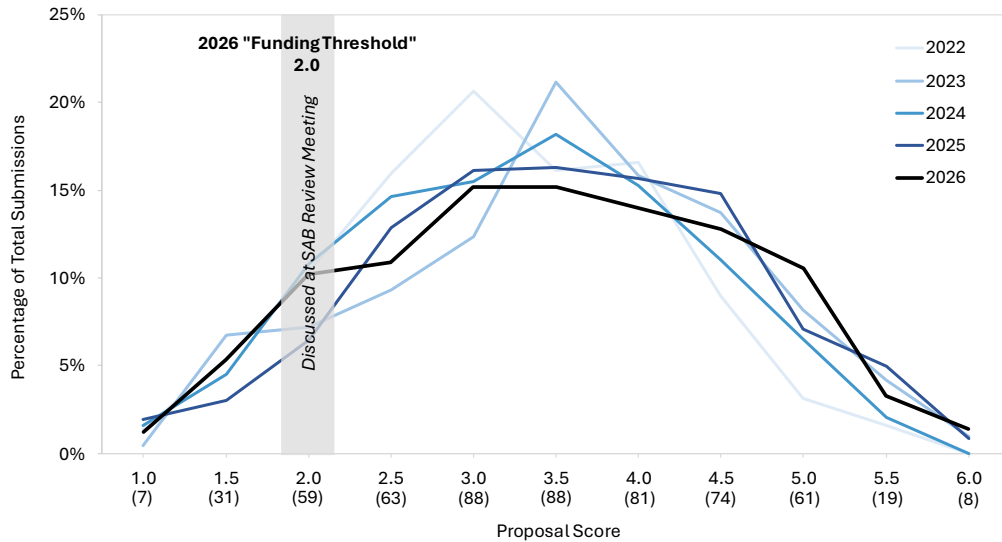


Figure | Distribution Frequency of Research Proposal Scores (2022-2026). The percentage of all submitted proposals (y-axis) with a given final score (x-axis) is shown for each of the past five years (colored lines, as indicated). The number of proposals with each score is shown in parentheses. The score distributions have been approximately normally distributed each year and consistent between years. Every proposal with a score that is lower than the funding threshold is recommended for funding. Proposals with scores higher than the funding threshold are generally not recommended for funding. Each proposal within the funding threshold is discussed in detail at the SAB review meeting by all members of the panel to determine which of them will be recommended for funding.

A “funding threshold” is determined by cumulating proposals from the top score downward — scores of 1.0, 1.5, 2.0, and so on — until the total exceeds the number of grants to be awarded that year (recently 85). In 2022-2025, proposals scoring 2.0 or better totaled fewer than 85, so the funding threshold was set at 2.5. This year (2026), proposals scoring 2.0 or better exceeded 85, so the funding threshold was 2.0.

Each year, roughly 40-60 proposals fall within the funding threshold. Before discussing those proposals in detail, the panel considers whether any of the proposals falling outside the funding threshold warrant inclusion in the discussion for possible funding.

The success rate reflects the number of grants awarded divided by the total number of submissions. Because the number of awarded grants has remained constant at 85 while proposal submissions increased by 24% in 2026, the overall success rate fell to 15% — and to 9% for new proposals. The number of renewal proposals is the roughly the same every year (≤ 85) and the success rate was 45% in 2026, consistent with recent years.