

REVIEWING PROCESS AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT

at KiKa



KiKa's Scientific Board

For the assessment of applications, KiKa is advised by the Scientific Board KiKa (WR KiKa). The WR KiKa is composed of distinguished independent cancer researchers. Each member of the WR KiKa has a specific expertise, which together cover all aspects of cancer research.

The WR KiKa consist of the following members:

- Prof. dr. Roderick Beijersbergen (Chairman)
- Prof. dr. Joop Jansen (Vice Chairman)
- Prof. dr. John Martens
- Prof. dr. Lonneke van de Poll
- Dr. Mirjam Crul
- Prof. dr. Winette van der Graaf
- Prof. dr. Joost Verhoeff
- Prof. dr. Taco Kuijpers
- Dr. Inge Jedema
- Prof. dr. Maroeska Rovers
- Prof. dr. Gerwin Huls

Reviewing process of (pilot) projects

- No preselection is applied. However, KiKa can decide not to take an application into further consideration based on advice of the WR KiKa.
- All multi-annual research projects are first reviewed by at least two independent national and international external reviewers. The reviewers judge the scientific quality of the proposal, the proposed methodology, the feasibility of the project, the track record of the applicants, and the relevance of the application for pediatric oncology.
- Pilot projects are reviewed by the WR KiKa. On a case-by-case basis, the WR KiKa decides whether or not the application will be reviewed by external reviewers.
- A resubmission will be reviewed by the WR KiKa. The WR KiKa can advise to send the resubmission to external reviewers. These may be the same reviewers as for the original project, or new reviewers.
- The WR KiKa has access to information on all research projects funded by KiKa, including projects co-funded with other organizations (such as FIGHT KIDS CANCER (FKC) and Cancer Grand Challenges (CGC)). This information can be taken into account in the assessment and follow-up of applications.
- The WR KiKa reviews applications on scientific quality, feasibility, relevance, and fit with KiKa's mission. A central question is whether the proposed plan can

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realistically achieve the stated research goal, and whether that goal aligns with KiKa's mission. Even a strong proposal can receive a negative assessment if it does not fit this mission. Feasibility of the project is also critical. For example, if the required number of patients or study samples cannot be reached, or if the necessary expertise or resources are missing, this can lead to a rejection of the application. The WR KiKa advises the KiKa board if she deems a proposal eligible for funding.

- When assessing applications, the WR KiKa issues one of three recommendations: approval, conditional approval, or rejection.

Approval: the WR KiKa considers the application of sufficient scientific quality, feasible, relevant, and in line with KiKa's mission; the application meets the assessment criteria. The WR KiKa advises the KiKa board to fund the application. The WR KiKa may add comments or recommendations, with the expectation that the researchers take these into account during the execution of the project.

Conditional approval: the WR KiKa considers the application of sufficient quality, but sets a limited number of concrete, verifiable conditions that must be met before the project is approved for funding. These are explicitly not fundamental objections. Examples include involving a specific expert in the project, providing an approved METC application, clarifying or supplementing a technical aspect, specifying a collaboration, or correcting a specific part of the budget. The applicant receives an overview of the specific conditions that must be met. The KiKa research team will check whether the conditions have been met. If necessary, the WR KiKa is consulted. If the set conditions are judged to have been sufficiently met, the KiKa Board decides whether to adopt the WR KiKa's advice to fund the project.

Rejection: the WR KiKa considers the application not eligible for funding and advises the KiKa board to reject the application. The application has fundamental shortcomings that cannot be resolved with limited adjustments, such as an insufficiently developed methodology, insufficiently demonstrated feasibility, a flawed statistical plan, or insufficient alignment with KiKa's mission.

- The KiKa board decides which proposals will be funded, based on the available budget. The decision of the KiKa board will be communicated as soon as possible to the project leader(s). This decision will be explained as thoroughly as possible.
- The procedures described above can be adapted or accelerated when KiKa considers this necessary.
- Only when a decision to reject an application is based on **factual inaccuracies**, the project leader(s) can appeal against the decision by writing a letter of appeal. This letter can be sent to research@kika.nl. The KiKa research team aims to respond within six weeks after receiving the letter of appeal. In all other cases, applicants may submit a revised application at any subsequent deadline. This is only an option if applications, after careful consideration of the reasons stated in the rejection letter, believe that the identified shortcomings can be realistically and adequately resolved. In that case, applicants should carefully address all comments from the reviewers and the WR KiKa. Please make clear in which way the application is adapted. This can be done via an accompanying letter and by visually highlighting the parts of the text that have been adapted.

Quality assessment of ongoing projects

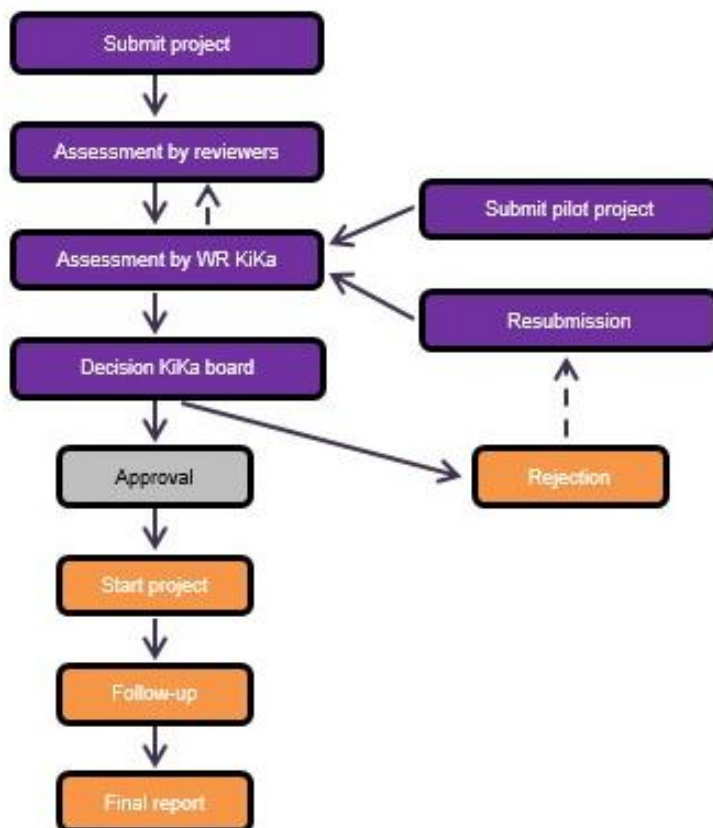
The progress of ongoing projects is assessed by KiKa at fixed moments. KiKa reserves the right to stop financing of a project if KiKa judges the progress to be insufficient. Progress will be assessed at three moments:

REVIEWING PROCESS AND QUALITY ASSESSMENT at KiKa

- **Kick-off and progress meetings:** KiKa organizes regular meetings with the project leaders to discuss the project and its progress.
- **Mid-term review:** projects that have a duration of more than two years will be evaluated during a KiKa mid-term review meeting. During this meeting, that is organized bi-annually, the projects will be assessed by the mid-term review committee. This committee consists of a panel of scientific experts. The mid-term review committee is chaired by a member of the WR KiKa. The mid-term review committee reports its findings to the KiKa board (who decides about the continuation of funding). A negative assessment might result in (temporary) discontinuation of funding.
- **Final report:** when a project is finalized, the results and output of the research need to be reported. This report will be assessed by the WR KiKa.

Below, the KiKa reviewing process and quality assessment are depicted schematically.

Research (pilot) projects



Questions?

Contact the research team of KiKa via research@kika.nl.