# Campbell Collaboration Seeks Peer Reviewers

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>> JOANN STARKS: Hello and welcome everyone to today’s webcast, brought to you by the Center on Knowledge Translation for Disability and Rehabilitation Research (or KTDRR) at American Institutes for Research, and The Campbell Collaboration or “C2.” The Center on KTDRR is funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (known as NIDILRR) in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living. I am Joann Starks, with the Austin office of American Institutes for Research (or A-I-R). I also want to thank some of my colleagues who are helping with today’s event: Ann Outlaw, Steven Boydston, and Rebecca Gaines.

This webcast is another in a series co-sponsored by C2 and the Center on KTDRR. In today’s webcast, Dr. Carlton Fong will discuss the need for peer reviewers in C2's systematic review process. He will also describe how NIDILRR grantees and other researchers can apply to serve as peer reviewers in their content areas for Campbell's Disability Subgroup, as well as other review areas. We want to encourage our viewers to ask questions today, and then to submit their names to Dr. Fong for consideration to be a peer reviewer for C2.

Now I’d like to introduce our speaker, Dr. Carlton Fong, whois Managing and Associate Editor for the Education Coordinating Group of the Campbell Collaboration and is a co-author on several C2 systematic reviews. He is a postdoctoral research fellow in the Department of Educational Administration with the Program in Higher Education Leadership at The University of Texas at Austin. Dr. Fong also serves as a consultant for the Center on KTDRR. Carlton, welcome, and please go ahead.

>> CARLTON FONG: Great. Thank you, Joann. I'm very pleased to be invited to give this talk and I'm excited to be able to speak about Campbell and the process to become a peer reviewer and the process of doing a peer review. And so thank you once again.

I will begin by giving an overview of the webcast, and some of the talking points I will be covering. So first I will be doing an introduction of Campbell. I will be talking about the type of products that we produce in C2; the title, the protocol, and the systematic review. I will be discussing the process of peer review and specifically focusing on the content of peer reviewer and also some logistics on how to become a peer reviewer, and then we'll end with questions.

So starting off, some introduction on the Campbell Collaboration, or C2. Well, here is some brief history. It began in the 1990s, as a response to the Cochrane Collaboration, which began to produce systematic reviews in the health field, and when there was a need to identify systematic reviews for social issues such as education, crime and justice, social welfare; the need to create a network to study these issues began about 20 years ago. And today, the Campbell Collaboration is an international network of scholars, policymakers, practitioners, funders, students, and many others who are interested in evidence-based practice and systematic reviews.

Our motto is to have “better evidence for a better world.” C2 aims to promote positive social change due to production and use of systematic reviews for evidence‑based policy and practice. We exist to help people make well-informed decisions about interventions. Our mission is to provide rigorous and relevant reviews of research and share this information broadly. We want to study what works, what doesn't, and why. We aim to improve outcomes for all people.

Currently C2 is divided into six coordinating groups. They are [Crime and Justice](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/crime_and_justice/index.php), [Education](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/ECG/Education/index.php), [International Development](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/international_development/index.php), the [Methods](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Methods/index.php) group, [Social Welfare](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/social_welfare/index.php) and the [Knowledge Translation and Implementation](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Users/index.php) group. These, there are four kind of content groups and those were the Crime and Justice, Education, International Development, and Social Welfare, and then there's more of the Methods group that deals with issues surrounding the rigor of our products, as well as Knowledge Translation, how users are able to use the available evidence.

And future directions of our group, is to expand the type of groups that we have. Currently we are focused on just these four content areas, but we know there are many other pressing social issues today that could use this type of synthetic work in which we’re understanding the evidence that's available.So things like the environment, climate change, workforce issues, these are other topics that Campbell is hoping to cover in the future years to come.

I will now move on to the three types of documents that C2 primarily deals with, and they are the title, the protocol, and the systematic review. The title is the very first step when an author team is interested in conducting a systematic review through Campbell. The purpose of the title is to allow the coordinating group to determine if the proposed review topic falls within the scope of Campbell and that particular group, and whether it's substantially similar to a previous review that's already underway or already published within the C2 library.

Secondly, the title also provides the editor and the editorial team with sufficient information to determine if the proposed review is relatively in line with the standards and the guidelines with C2. Specifically, the title includes the research question, the basic information about the topic, the target population, the outcomes and the nature of the research primary studies that will be included in the review. This particular document does not require peer review, but it gets reviewed by the editor and the editorial team, as well as the coordinating group to see if this is a viable topic, and it gets published directly.

The second and the third document, the protocol and the actual review, do go through a peer review process. So those are ones that I will spend particularly more attention on for this webcast. The second document, once the title and registration have been approved by Campbell, the author team will go ahead and begin their protocol, the research protocol. And this phase is extremely important because it requires the review team to develop a detailed plan for completing that review. It allows the editorial team to provide guidance and advice that will help to ensure that the final completed review will meet the standards of Campbell. It provides opportunity for potential problems or misunderstandings to be identified and addressed during the planning stage to avoid redoing or correcting any aspects of a review.

The second purpose of the protocol is to help make the review process as well-defined, systematic, and unbiased as possible while also maintaining practicality. We know that undertaking a systematic review is complex and involves many judgments and decisions. So we want to be able to have a relatively firm and detailed proposal of how author teams are going to undertake this review and we want to provide as much feedback at that point to make sure that the systematic review is done with the utmost rigor.

And the last document is the actual completed review. It builds upon the protocol by not only describing the methods once again, but actually the implementation of that plan, which was described in the protocol. It heavily draws from the protocol and how the systematic review was conducted but also contains very important details about the results and the discussion of the findings in relation to policy and to practice. In both these stages, the peer reviewer is extremely important. Each review topic is unique, and we try to find the most qualified peer reviewers to really engage with these documents to provide their content and method expertise to the protocol and the systematic review.

So before diving into the peer review process, I want to go ahead and pause for a little bit, just to see if there's any questions or comments regarding the history and mission of Campbell, as well as those three documents that I briefly went over.

>> JOANN STARKS: Everyone, please feel free to write your question there in the chat box in the bottom.

>> CARLTON FONG: Okay. I will go ahead and keep going. But as Joann mentioned, please do chime in whenever a question arises. So the peer review process. I will start off with the protocol, [which] requires three types of peer review.

The first type of peer review is the *information retrieval review*, and this is done with an expert in information retrieval and library sciences and that person is able to review and critique the search strategy that is used and proposed in the protocol to maximize that search strategy to make sure it's comprehensive and exhaustive. Campbell Collaboration also has an international scope as its focus and so also being able to locate all relevant studies with an international focus is something that Campbell heavily stresses as well. So this information retrieval review will systematically look at the search strategy, suggest different strategies to locate different databases, different conferences, different associations to really locate all possible data that can be included in the review. This is often done in-house with particular contacts that we have in this area.

And the same for the second type of peer review, which is our *methods review*. This is done through our [Methods Coordinating Group](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/Methods/index.php), and they solicit a peer reviewer within that group to evaluate the methods that are proposed as well as used in the final review. This reviewer will look at not only the search strategy as well but also the methods of integrating all the data as well as the interpretation of the findings as well.

The last review is going to be the focus of this webcast, and that's the *content peer review*. And for the protocol and the final review, we solicit two peer reviewers to evaluate the content and the background and really why this review is important to conduct or not. And this is where that highly selective, highly unique experts are really sought out because each topic is distinct and we want to find those content reviewers that have the most expertise in that area, that are able to provide feedback and guidance to author teams. The content peer reviewer will be evaluating aspects of the background, the rationale, objectives, and to some degree the methods, because the search strategy is important to capture terms, to capture keywords that are relevant to a particular field, which we're hoping our content, our peer reviewers would have expertise in as well.

So to give a little bit more background on the content peer review, I want to go over some of the aspects that we're hoping our peer reviewers would be able to cover in relation to the content peer review. As a peer reviewer, we ask that all our content reviewers address the elements of the protocol or the review that are listed here, under general points, background, objectives, methods, and results for the completed review. Since the peer reviewers are more oriented towards the content of the protocol, or the review, we wish they would focus their attentions on the first four points and not so much--first three points and not as much on the methods and results, but only if there is something that is relevant to mention.

For the general points, our peer reviewers are asked to determine if the topic is relevant for policy and/or practice, and is generally written in language that is easily understood, in other words, someone who is not an expert in that area should be able to understand it and we're hoping our content peer reviewers would be able to speak on those points.

Secondly, our peer reviewer should be able to address the background. It should explain the reason for why the review is being done, whether the review is providing a clear description of the intervention of the problem, to consider how the intervention might work or describe the theory of change for that particular intervention, and also be able to give feedback on the discussion of existing evidence and reviews. We're hoping that our peer reviewers would have substantive knowledge in the field and be able to make sure that the review is covering the adequate coverage of evidence in that particular area.

Regarding the objectives, we're hoping our content peer reviewers would be able to validate whether the objectives clearly state the primary aim of the review in clear and acceptable language.

Regarding the methods, once again, this isn't necessarily a particular area of focus for our content peer reviewers but we are hoping because of their substantive expertise they are able to give some advice regarding, in particular, the search strategy. If there's any keywords, any terms, any journals that may involve hand searching, any associations that would be useful to query for any existing data, any other population terms or constructs that may be relevant to the search, we're hoping our content peer reviewers would be able to weigh in here and give their expertise on the type of search strategies that should be employed for the methods section.

And lastly, for the results section, for a completed review, we're hoping our peer reviewers would also be able to evaluate the results, how they are presented, again using clear and accessible language but also to be able to see how those findings translate into policy and practice. We're hoping our peer reviewers would also have expertise in knowledge translation and how the evidence is being used for both policymakers and practitioners and so to have advice and guidance from peer reviewers in those areas are highly sought after as well.

So, how to become a peer reviewer for C2. Currently, every coordinating group has their own managing editorial process, but you can definitely email me. I have been involved in the education group, as well as the Subgroup on Disability, and if you contact me, and if you are interested in other areas of Campbell, I can also forward you to the managing editors of that group. But one great starting point is just to contact me and my email address is right there: [managing.editor.ecg@c2admin.org](mailto:managing.editor.ecg@c2admin.org)

You can provide the following information: your name, your affiliation and country. As you know, we are an international network and so we solicit author teams and topics that have an international focus. Your email address, your highest degree. We prefer content peer reviewers with a doctoral degree, but we have often used individuals with a master's degree and substantive expertise through their own work experience.

Your field of expertise. I think this is a really important area. So the more detail you can provide here, the better, just so we can match you to particular topics, to particular systematic reviews that would align more closely with your research areas.

One thing to note about becoming a peer reviewer, and some additional guidelines that I didn't mention, is that Campbell is currently applying to join COPE, C-O-P-E, the [Committee on Publication Ethics](http://publicationethics.org/), and this is an organization that simply maintains journals and different publication entities like Campbell to make sure that they are following certain guidelines and ethics for publication. And so I will go ahead and paste [the URL](http://publicationethics.org/) into the chat box. This is some more detail regarding this particular entity, as well as the guidelines that we are following to really maintain a transparent and rigorous peer review process.

This is also, we also do a blind peer review process in which the author teams do not know who the peer reviewers are, unless you choose to self-disclose. You are able to see the author teams because this is a way to actually identify if this team is able to do the rigorous take on this review and to evaluate the rigor of the author team to conduct a review. So just one quick note on that.

And one very important note about becoming a peer reviewer is that we offer an honorarium for our peer reviewers, if they are able to complete their review on a certain timetable. So unlike most journals and most other publication outlets, we want to encourage the peer review process to be as efficient and speedy as possible. So Campbell Collaboration actually pays our peer reviewers, both content and methodological experts, to really provide their review in a timely manner. And so we offer $300 to peer reviewers if they are able to turn around their review within three weeks and $200 within four weeks. And beyond that, we still welcome your review, but we are unable to offer an honorarium for your services. But hopefully this is great motivation to become a peer reviewer, not only to contribute to the scholarly endeavor and the great work that Campbell is doing, but also to make a little extra on the side, if that's of interest to you.

Okay. I'm getting a question here from Joann. “If I'm 100% on a NIDILRR grant, will I be able to accept the compensation from C2 for serving as a reviewer?”

Great question! That's really kind of each person's situation, depending on their institution, and different, you know, financial conflicts of interest and things like that. So I would definitely query your own department and your own HR and supervisors in your own institution to discuss work outside of your official duties to see how that would work out. So, great question, but I would definitely run it by your supervisors and department on how they can navigate through extra work like being a peer reviewer. All right. I will pause here and just see if there's any other questions.

>> JOANN STARKS: It looks like we have a question coming in. So we'll hold for Johanna to get her question in.

>> CARLTON FONG: Great. Great question, Johanna. “On average, how many reviews do peer reviewers complete each year?” And this really depends. Usually the protocol and the review are lengthy endeavors. And currently Campbell gets about, at least the education group, gets about 30 to 40 submissions per year. And so it really depends on the particular topic of interest, the particular subfield, but I would say it's no more than one per year. Typically we ask the same reviewers to review the protocol and the completed review and between those two phases, it's usually about one year between doing the review and completing it and getting it to the next stage.

So I would say, at least if you are a peer reviewer for a particular protocol, it will be another year or so before you are asked to review a second document. Of course, depending on the influx of submissions that we get, and your particular area, we may ask you a couple of times. I know we have some go-to folks in disability that we like to ask a lot, but even for those people, it's usually no more than two or three per year and, of course, depending on, you know, your own demands at your work and your schedule, you can always say no and we'll look for new folks to review for us. And we are not going to hold you to required amounts of reviews per year. We are pretty flexible with who we recruit, because each document we really want to be pretty specialized on who we are asking for to help us with our peer reviews. And so rarely will folks be asked to review multiple documents, unless it's really in your field or area.

>> JOANN STARKS: Thank you, Carlton. We had another question that came in, but I think you just answered, which is: “What if I send in my resume and I am accepted and I agree to serve as a peer reviewer for the C2, do I have to take every review that you might send to me?”

>> CARLTON FONG: We typically take three or four to review and we typically take the first two that say yes. So don't feel obligated if you join this pool of reviewers that you will be roped into having to do it every time, but we like to keep this pool just so we kind of know some content experts that we can go to when a particular review comes up and we see a good fit between topic and that particular area of expertise.

I'm getting another question from Gina and Mary, about an example of the review criteria. I can send that via chat. It's a little long. So I'm afraid to send the whole thing over, but maybe I will just send the first three bullet points or so and hopefully it won't bog down the whole thing.

I realize the formatting is not the prettiest there but for general points we ask for, you know, two questions that I mentioned earlier. For the background, there's some different phrases there that are the criteria to which we are looking for. It's not a really formalized rubric, but it’s pretty open-ended in terms of the type of feedback you can provide. I know different coordinating groups have different feedback, but these questions are the ones that are primarily used for the education group, and as well as, I believe, the crime and justice group as well. So once again, I apologize for not having a full group to display here but hopefully these phrases kind of give you an idea of the type of criteria that we are looking for.

Yep, it's definitely more descriptive. We don't have any scales. Actually, it's a little different from most journals in which there is a formalized accept and revise and resubmit and reject. Here at Campbell, we do reject and that's been a little bit more common these days. But we're readily available to provide technical assistance and the editorial team, I would say, is quite hands on and really hospitable to providing the guidance for author teams to complete their reviews. We are really interested in author teams doing the best reviews in the most rigorous and systematic fashion and we are not about, you know, rejecting and weeding out reviews that don't qualify.

We're really invested in producing the best evidence and so I would say the process is very constructive and the peer reviewers are really asked to provide, like you mentioned, the descriptive and constructive aspects to a review that would be most beneficial for the author team and the editor or associate editor would cull through all the peer reviewers comments and provide a pretty detailed action letter on different aspects that are raised by peer reviewers to address for their review. And so they are provided with an action letter, as well as all the comments from peer reviewers and so really this process is geared towards being the most formative experience for the author teams.

>> JOANN STARKS: Carlton, we had another question you may have missed. It's from Corinna.

>> CARLTON FONG: I think I saw it. “Our review activities, are they conducted remotely or does the team come together in one location?”

It's done completely remotely. The review teams individually submit their reviews from methods, from information retrieval and from the two content peer reviewers and like I said, the editor or the associate editor is the one who kind of brings all of those together in a single action letter, as well as appending all the individual reviews. As you know, the scope of Campbell is international and although it would be great to sit in a room and have us all discuss the merits and the weaknesses of a particular document, I think this is the most practical way in which we are able to undergo the peer review process.

>> JOANN STARKS: And we have a question from Patricia. “Usually what is the time commitment to a review? How many hours can it take?” I know that's going to be a tough one to answer.

>> CARLTON FONG: It is! Well, I can kind of give you a page range for some of these documents. The typical protocol, I would say, without the appendix can range between 20 to 30 single-spaced paged. So it's a proposal, right. It's the background, it's the proposed methods and typically it's a coding form, which the author teams will use to review a primary study. And so I would say the protocol can, you know, take, I don't know, maybe four or five hours, depending on how quickly you can read through that and be able to provide mostly the content aspects of that protocol. So it would be the background, different parts of the method, the rationale and so oftentimes our content peer reviewers don't have much to add regarding the methods because that's not their area. And so I would say since the focus is mostly on the content, even though the full document is rather lengthy, the focus is on maybe just a few of those sections of the protocol. So I would say the protocol definitely does not take as long.

The completed review with and without appendixes; I would say the final review with tables can be quite lengthy, I think, probably around 70 to 80 pages, but once again, a lot of that are tables documenting all the meta-analytic findings, as well as individual study characteristics. And once again the focus is on the background, the rationale for the review, the objectives, as well as the results and the discussion about how those results translate to policy and practice, but definitely, the review is a more lengthy endeavor. So we do give our reviewers more time, three to four weeks to complete that, knowing that's a longer document to go through.

And so like you said, it is kind of hard to give an actual range, but I reviewed protocols before for C2 and it's taken me usually about four to five hours to read through it and also to answer some of those questions that I talked about. For a review, I would say it would take twice as long.

>> JOANN STARKS: Great. Thank you. We did have another question that came in. “If I became a peer reviewer for C2, would I still be able to work as a member of a review authoring team?”

>> CARLTON FONG: Yes, totally for sure! And we often use previous authors of reviews to be our peer reviewers because they know the process, they are very familiar with Campbell and these documents. And being a peer reviewer won't preclude you in joining as an author on an author team. In fact, it actually might make you more qualified to become an author on an author team as you are reading through and reviewing documents for Campbell.

I would say that it's, I guess the opposite has been true as well. We actually had someone who served as a peer reviewer, and they gave such great feedback and advice on how to improve the review that the author team actually asked for permission to add that peer reviewer as part of the author team and be included in that review, and so we thought that was kind of neat story in which a peer review became an author because of that person’s expertise in that area. I know that wasn’t an exact answer to that question, but I thought that was kind of a fun story to tell.

>> JOANN STARKS: I think that's good to know that that can happen. So we did have one more question. I think it's probably going to be our last, unless anyone else has something. “What happens if I agree to do a review of a systematic review and I start working on it and then something comes up at work that's going to require all of my time and concentration and I'm already started. What happens then? What do I do?”

>> CARLTON FONG: Yeah. That--well, that puts us in a bit a tough situation, because we do offer those honoraria to ensure that our reviewers get back to us within a timely manner. And so you are still welcome to be a peer reviewer, and we would still welcome your comments regarding a particular protocol or review, but you will lose the opportunity to receive an honorarium, just simply because we want to really ensure a speedy response from our peer reviewers but you are more than welcome to still contribute your comments and we would welcome them and forward them on to the author.

Like we said, we really want the best evidence to be provided through Campbell. And so we would definitely still welcome your comments and happily forward those on to the author team. But definitely let us know. We are flexible. We will have to find another peer reviewer or if you want to give us another timeline, we can see if that works with our schedule as well.

As you can imagine, we are not only recruiting peer reviewers for the content review, but we are also at the mercy of our information retrieval specialists and our methods review as well and so they really have to come together in order for us to write an action letter that encompasses all three of those areas. And so let's say if the method review is delayed, then we might have more time to still receive a late content review and we can include that in our review package, so to speak. But unfortunately, the honorarium is time sensitive to that three week and four week period.

>> JOANN STARKS: Great. Thank you very much, Carlton. I have one other question I wanted to ask myself. I know that I saw that Campbell is sponsoring some grants to support systematic reviews. And can you tell me anything about it or where I could find information, or if other people wanted to know more about that?

>> CARLTON FONG: Yeah. Well, it's actually in collaboration with AIR as well. You can go to [campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/) and you will find on the main page [a link to our grant program](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/news_/Campbell_Collaboration_grant_programme_for_systematic_reviews.php), Campbell is offering up to eight awards made possible through AIR in all areas of the coordinating groups that we currently have to do a systematic review. So this is a great way to apply for funding for a Campbell review, which, like I said is a complex undertaking. There's coding. There's search strategies. There's information retrieval and so having those extra funds to do a review to do a review that would fit Campbell, would be a wonderful opportunity and so I would suggest those here listening to this webcast to apply to look for more information. The due date is coming up very soon. It is, I believe, next week [March 29, 2016]. And then there's also a grant program for methods as well. And so if that's something that you are interested in, in systematic review methods, I believe there's a parallel grant program to that as well.

>> JOANN STARKS: Great. Well, thank you very much. I think our time is up. In fact, we have gone a little over. Thank you, Carlton for being with us and sharing information about the need for peer reviewers and how our listeners can apply to serve in that capacity for the Campbell Collaboration.

>> CARLTON FONG: Great. You are welcome and one last plug, is the [What Works Global Summit](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/WWGS/index.php) that's happening this September in London. And I just put a link there on the chat box. This is our big colloquium conference with Campbell and other agencies together about what works. I think this will be a great opportunity if you are interested in submitting or attending this conference.

>> JOANN STARKS: Great. Thanks so much. We would love for you, our listeners, to get in touch with the [Center on KTDRR](mailto:ktdrr@air.org) or with the [Campbell Collaboration](mailto:info@c2admin.org). If you have any more questions or you would like to get involved in some way. You can see the contact email addresses on the current slide, and, of course, you can visit the [C2 website](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org) or follow the C2 on [Twitter](https://twitter.com/C2update) and [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/The-Campbell-Collaboration-155517641139668/) for updates on what’s happening in the Collaboration.

We also hope you will take a few minutes to give us some feedback about the webcast by filling out a [brief evaluation form](http://www.surveygizmo.com/s3/2645480/Evaluation-C2PeerReview), and we'll send an email with the evaluation link to everyone who had preregistered.

I want to say thanks again to Dr. Carlton Fong for being with us today and I want to thank the AIR staff that helped with planning and logistics and, of course, we want to thank NIDILRR for their support to allow us to offer these webcasts and other events. We thank you for joining us for this webcast today and we look forward to seeing you for the next one. Thank you and good afternoon.