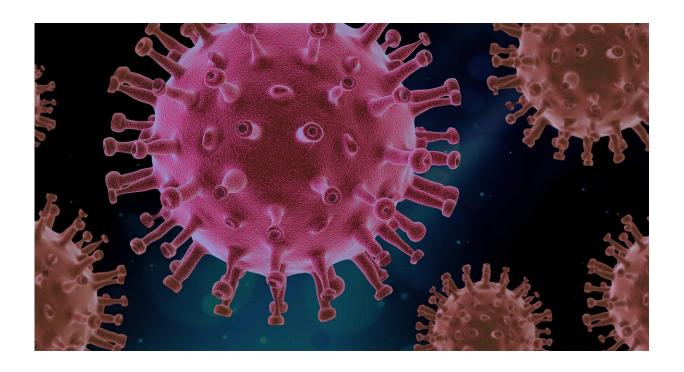# Artificial intelligence to enable fast-track review of COVID-19 research proposals

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Credit: CC0 Public Domain

An Artificial Intelligence (AI) tool to help funders identify specialists to peer-review proposals for emergency COVID-19 research has been developed. It aims to help fast-track the allocation of funding, and in turn, accelerate the scientific response to the virus.

The open-access publisher Frontiers has specifically developed the

recommendation [tool](#) to aid funders during the crisis by helping them identify new reviewers. Under normal circumstances, the review process for [research funding](#) typically takes place by committee and can take a matter of months. However, since the COVID-19 outbreak, experts have become less available, and the urgency of this situation commands a tighter timeframe.

Simona Grasso, adviser in [health research](#) and health innovation at the Research Council of Norway, said: "The reviewer recommender tool made available from Frontiers media, has been helpful and crucial in recruiting experts for our COVID-19 Emergency Call. Due to the short time to assess the proposals, the broad thematic areas of the call and the amount of received application, has been a challenge recruiting many experts with a profile that fully fits the applications. The AI-based recommender tool is straightforward, user-friendly and allowed us to speed-up the recruiting process. In three clicks we managed to get a full 'application-customized' list over potential reviewers and their relative contact information. This tool is highly recommended."

Fred Fenter, [executive editor](#) at Frontiers, said: "It is fantastic to see the [research community](#) rallying to solve this crisis and, in particular, the response by funders to issue rapid response calls for research projects into the virus. This, however, will put a lot of stress on their review processes. This is where we can contribute by making available our technology and network of experts to help alleviate the huge reviewer demand in a narrow field of expertise. Using our AI platform, funders can circumvent some of the disruption being created by COVID-19. They can identify a broader pool of specialists and expedite the review process."

The publisher's in-house technology team has exploited the AI technology they use to review research articles when they are submitted to any one of its 79 scientific journals. The Coronavirus Reviewer

Recommender suggests experts based on keywords or thorough semantic analysis of text.

Fred Fenter added: "Experts in fields related to Coronavirus are going above and beyond the call of duty to save lives as clinicians and to conduct vital research. We ask any funder who has announced emergency [funding](link) for Coronavirus and COVID-19 research to make use of the technology, and to exert sensibility and common sense when contacting experts."

The Coronavirus Reviewer Recommender is the latest tool made available on Frontiers' Coronavirus Knowledge Hub. This includes the Coronavirus Funding Monitor, a centralized portal of current funding opportunities for the research community offering a curated list of open funding calls and other support for researchers, non-profit organizations and commercial organizations. Both tools have been developed by Frontiers to help increase the impact of and coordinate information about unprecedented amounts of emergency research funding being mobilized across the globe to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic.

  More information: Coronavirus Reviewer Recommender: coronavirus.frontiersin.org/reviewer-recommender

Provided by Frontiers