BCS' Managed Evaluation and Reporting Integrated Toolkit (MERIT)

The federal government spends billions of dollars on basic and applied research each year. To ensure proper stewardship of these taxpayer dollars, the government requires regular peer review of research projects by independent subject matter experts. To help ensure reviews are transparent, consistent, and an effective use of the time invested by reviewers, principal investigators, and federal program staff, BCS leverages its Managed Evaluation and Reporting Integrated Toolkit (*MERIT*) as well as an experienced staff who specialize in implementing rigorous review processes.

MERIT, a proprietary web-based peer review tool, assists clients in managing and executing project- and program-level peer reviews by consolidating independent reviewer comments and scores, sharing relevant files, and managing process logistics. Using our 20+ years of experience supporting review activities, BCS designed and built *MERIT* to fit individual client needs as well as provide best management practices throughout the U.S. Department of Energy. Several programs leverage it as a "best practice" for actively managing the entire peer review process.

Facilitating the Review Process: *MERIT* is a permissions-based platform whereby users can view and access functionality based on their role in the peer review process. For example:
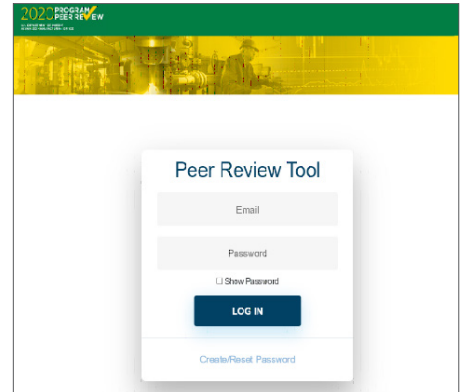
MERIT allows **clients** to:

- Actively manage multiple project reviews in a single application
- Customize branding, evaluation forms, and scoring rubrics
- Share any files or links that could support an improved review process, including full schedule details, templates, or strategic plans
- Access project files (e.g., presentations and abstracts), project data, and reviewer comments
- Export comprehensive review content into customized reports, complete with score analysis.

MERIT allows **presenters** to:

- Manage their own presentation, abstract, and supporting documentation uploads
- Access their individual reviews and scores
- Respond to reviewer comments and questions.

MERIT allows **reviewers** to:

- Access all assigned presentations, abstracts, and program materials in advance of the review
- Track review progress and note any potential conflicts of interest
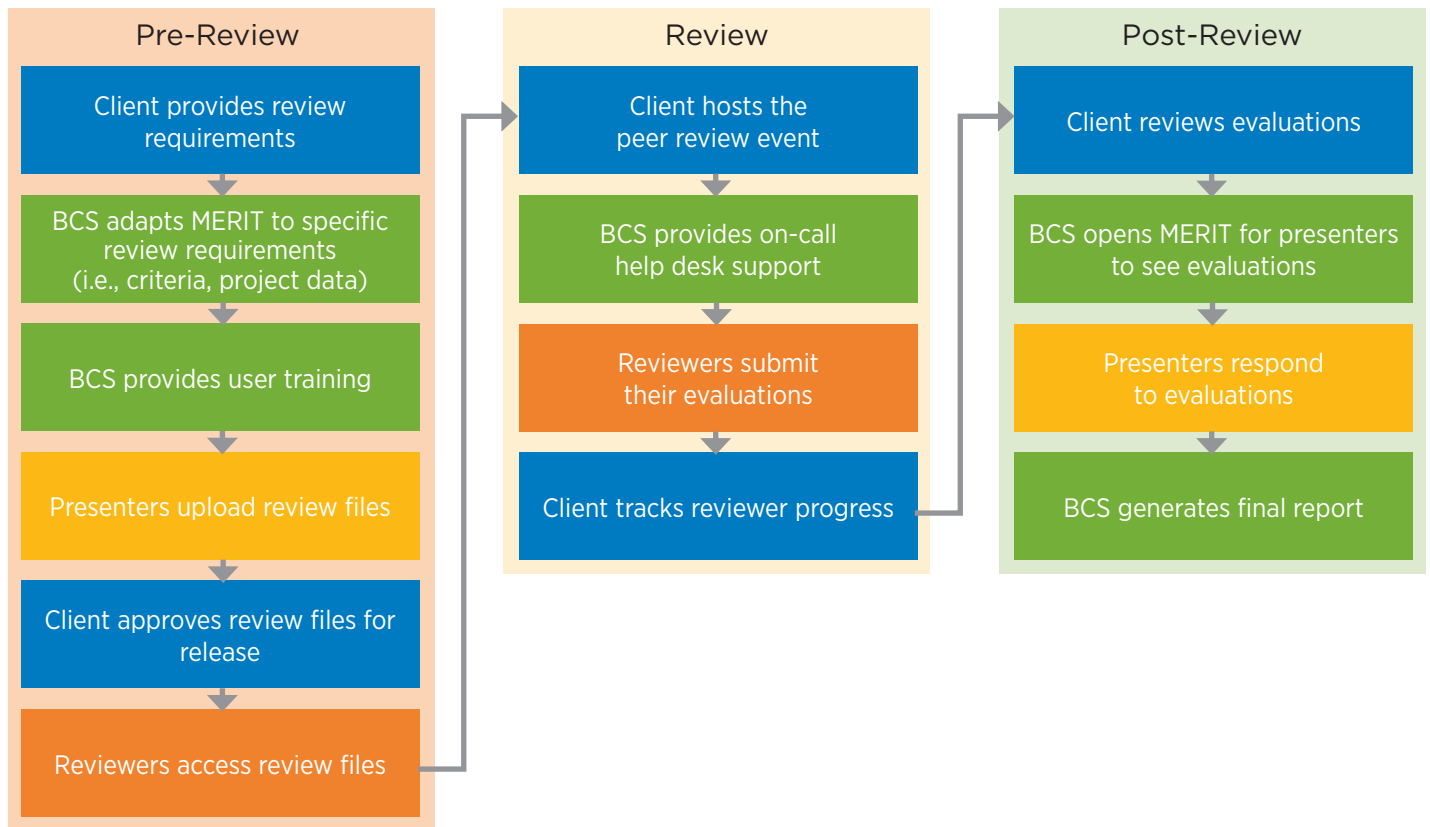- Submit review comments and scores within a centralized and easy-to-navigate system.

KEY FEATURES

MERIT allows for:

- Customizable evaluation criteria and scoring metrics
- File sharing
- Form-fill emails for centralized communications with participants
- At-a-glance progress reports
- Frequent auto-save of reviewer comment entries
- Oversight and edit of reviewer comments before release to presenters
- Presenter response to reviewer comments
- Instant consolidation and export of reviewer scores and comments into Word files with summary project information, scoring charts, and analysis

Active Management and Reporting Capabilities: Clients can actively manage every stage of the review process with an at-a-glance snapshot of progress, including the number of presentation files uploaded and the submission status of reviewer comments and scores. **MERIT** allows participants to manage communications through a centralized, bulk email feature. For example, at a click of a button, **MERIT** will email all presenters with pertinent data such as their scheduled presentation dates and times. Clients can also review and edit comments for appropriate language within **MERIT** before distribution to presenters. At the conclusion of the peer review, all comments, scores, and presenter responses can be exported instantly into a Word file, with customized scoring graphics, charts, and analysis, as well as summary project data (e.g., budget, period of performance, and abstract). This function expedites the report publication process—helping to efficiently deliver results to stakeholder audiences.

User *MERIT* Functions per Stage of Review

Additional Support Capabilities: In addition to providing comprehensive **MERIT** support—including set-up, user training, and data exports—BCS can provide services to manage all aspects of the review:

- BCS staff are experienced in forming and liaising with independent steering committees to ensure that peer reviews are conducted consistently and appropriately.

- Many BCS staff are trained meeting facilitators and employ these skills to support improved peer review meetings and panel discussions.

- Technical editors and graphic design artists can support all web content updates, agendas, program booklets, and final report publications to create professional and polished deliverables throughout the peer review process.

To schedule a live demonstration of **MERIT** and discuss how it can meet your program's needs, please contact Colleen Tomaino, Vice President of Clean Energy, at ctomaino@bcs-hq.com or 410-794-6103.