SEFH Summit | Sept. 6th
Q&A: From Review to Approval: Navigating SRC

1. Can people from different schools from the same ISD collaborate together and participate as a team?
   Contact the SEFH office, info@sefhouston.org.

2. Who do we contact in regards to IRB approval for a project by a student from a district that doesn't participate?
   SEFH does not have a regional IRB committee. If students are unable to access an IRB committee, they are strongly encouraged to avoid projects involving human subjects to ensure compliance with ethical standards. Should a student choose to form an external IRB, the adult sponsor is responsible for ensuring the IRB Committee members fulfill the required ISEF guidelines.

3. Are there tools that would not need a qualified scientist form?
   Any tool that seems not a common part of the researcher's daily routine or common usage will most likely need a qualified scientist form. Consult the ISEF rule book to help better answer depending on the tools you are using. https://www.societyforscience.org/isef/international-rules/rules-and-guidelines/

4. Can you please let know if SRC and IRB are needed if a student is using publicly available datasets (non identifiable patient information) for their machine learning research project to develop an algorithm?
   Databases collected from the internet that do not contain identifiable information are exempt from IRB approval.

5. Is IRB review required if no human subjects are involved?
   IRB is only needed if the project contains human subjects.

6. What are the list of supervisors/sponsor needed and is it per person or per project? And if the project has no need for IRB how many would we need then?
   Every project needs one sponsor (teacher) to review the paperwork. Many types of projects require a designated supervisor to oversee the project. That can be the parent/guardian if the project is done at home, the teacher if the project is done at school, or someone else.

   An IRB has 3 members - school administrator, human risk evaluator, and educator (required for Senior Division). For your SRC, you need a veterinarian to sign for projects involving vertebrate animals and someone familiar with working with bacteria to review those projects. All students will need parental permission as well.

7. We are enrolled in a private school which may not have participated in ISEF in the past few years. How do we start?
   You will need to begin your science fair journey by participating in the district or regional level and then advancing to state - Texas Science and Engineering Fair. Ask your teacher if they know who you should contact if your school does not participate. If they do not, contact the SEFH office, info@sefhouston.org.

8. Will you confirm whether middle school needs a second teacher signature in IRB and if STEM Wizard will allow this without overwriting the first teacher's signature?
   A second teacher in IRB will overwrite the primary so no, a second signature for IRB is not required for the middle school projects.

9. What did you say about a finger prick and SRC? Please clarify.
   SRC is not required if the participant is performing their own capillary blood collection and disposing their own lancet. IRB is required since participants are involved.

10. Are students allowed to open petri dishes once bacteria has been growing in BSL-2 lab?
    Yes, under the guidance of a Designated Supervisor or a Qualified Scientist. Remember all BSL-2 safety precautions must be followed throughout the experimentation process, and those safety procedures must be stated in the research plan.

11. Are students in the Jr. Division allowed to grow yeast/lactobacillus at home and collect blood samples (like the glucometer example)?
    At home, students can do fermentation experiments with yeast and work with Lactobacillus introduced in their natural environment, but they can not culture the organisms in petri dishes.

12. Will you share the presentation?
    Yes, you may access the presentation here:

13. In Scenario #2 with the chicken and lemon, does the student need to use a BSL-2 Lab, a school lab or can they do the experiment at home?
    Scenario 2: A student wants to see whether lemon juice, vinegar, and salt can slow bacterial spoilage on raw chicken muscle tissue. They purchase chicken breast from a grocery store, cut it into small samples, apply the preservatives, and observe microbial growth over time by plating swabs from the tissue onto agar.

    A student can set up this project at home but cannot culture/grow the bacteria at home. The petri dishes containing the bacteria would need to be taken to school for incubation, observation, and disposal. If the student plans to open the petri dish for whatever reason, then it becomes a BSL-2 project. They need to determine that prior to the experiment start date.

14. For signatures from parents, teachers, administration, nurse, etc. they all need to be physically signed and then scanned in?
    The Middle School and ISEF forms will be filled out through STEM Wizard and will be digital. That signature type is the correct one. You will not need to print, sign, and scan in forms.

    If a Spanish-translated form is needed, please use the provided translated document here for reference. The student and parent should still complete the form online using STEM Wizard. The translated version is only meant to support understanding, not to be printed or signed or uploaded.

    For Senior Division projects, they will need to download the Participation agreement form, sign it, then upload it as a PDF into STEM Wizard.