Independent Review Organization

Buyer checklist and comparison worksheet

Define the review pathway first. Compare evidence of independence, reviewer fit, report quality, timing, reliability, and credentials before choosing an IRO.

Organization / team

Date

Review pathway, program, and jurisdiction

Review types, specialties, and expected case mix

Volumes, urgency categories, and coverage windows

Before you invite proposals

- [ ] Clinical or compliance owner has confirmed the applicable review pathway.
- [ ] Decision authority, notices, deadlines, and record ownership are defined.
- [ ] Required qualifications, credentials, and program eligibility are identified.
- [ ] All vendors will receive the same requirements and de-identified scenarios.

Must-have requirements / unresolved scope questions

Use the same checklist for every vendor. Check a box only after the item is confirmed; keep evidence references in your approved procurement records.

Evaluate the partner

Check only after reviewing evidence. An unchecked item is an open question, not an automatic failure.

Partner name / legal entity

Reviewer / date

Independence

- [ ] Written conflict policy covers both the organization and individual reviewers.
- [ ] Exclusion, reassignment, and late-discovered conflicts have defined processes.

Reviewer fit

- [ ] Qualification checks and specialty/jurisdiction matching are documented.
- [ ] Availability, declined assignments, and backup coverage have been explained.

Report quality

- [ ] Clinical colleagues have examined representative de-identified sample reports.
- [ ] Reports explain evidence, criteria, reasoning, limitations, and corrections.

Turnaround

- [ ] Start, stop, pauses, urgency groups, exclusions, and reporting periods are defined.
- [ ] Segmented results and late-case escalation procedures have been reviewed.

Reliability and information handling

- [ ] Intake, handoffs, secure exchange, continuity, and surge support have owners.
- [ ] Implementation dependencies, acceptance checks, fees, and extras are explicit.

Credentials and service scope

- [ ] Current credentials and eligibility were checked with the issuing organization.
- [ ] The covered legal entity, services, locations, and review pathways are confirmed.

Evidence reviewed / open gaps (no patient details)

Compare evidence and decide

Use S = supported, P = partial, G = gap, or N/A. Ratings summarize evidence; they are not a compliance score.

	Partner A	Partner B	Partner C

Evaluation area	A	B	C
Independence			
Reviewer fit			
Report quality			
Turnaround definitions			
Operational reliability			
Credentials and scope			

Priority gap / evidence still needed

Next action and owner

Due date

Decision / conditions to resolve before contracting

Sources and companion guide:

URAC: IRO accreditation

HealthCare.gov: external review

Read the online buyer guide