Preparing a Research Grant Application

Contents

A good quality research proposal will demonstrate a clear link between your research problem, the research methodology, the data to be collected (how, when, where, what kind) and the analysis of your data (how, what).

Top 10 Tips & Tricks

1. **Do your research**. What gets funded? What do proposals look like? What are the funding body's priorities? Who are the reviewers?
2. **Start early**. A funding proposal of the standard expected by major funding bodies can take months.
3. **Be strategic & focused**. Clarity and simplicity is the key to success. Be clear about what you are doing and why it is important.
4. **Always** follow the guidelines to the letter.
5. In the absence of a strong **track record** partner with those who do.
6. **Review, review, review**. Ask a colleague AND an informed layperson to review your proposal, get honest feedback.
7. Approach as **an opportunity** to compel the funding body to support your project to assist them with achieving their objectives.
8. **Write for the reviewers**. Assume the reviewer is an intelligent lay person familiar with your field in broad terms.
9. **Never underestimate the power of language**. Writing should be straightforward, clear and concise. Avoid slogans, jargon and polemic.
10. **Ask yourself:** Would you fund this? Why?

A typical proposal includes...

- ✓ **Information about investigators**
  - ✓ Contact details
  - ✓ Track record (publications, grants & CV)
- ✓ **Study proposal**
  - ✓ Rationale & background
  - ✓ Hypotheses, aims, objectives
  - ✓ Design (sample, methods and measures)
  - ✓ Analysis & statistical issues
- ✓ **Budget (including justification)**
- ✓ **Ethical implications**

Typical Assessment criteria

Vary according to the funding body, however most competitive funding schemes include the following core criteria:

- ✓ **Significance and innovation:** original, important contribution to science
- ✓ **Scientific quality:** hypotheses & objectives, strengths & weaknesses of design, methods & analysis appropriate to aims
- ✓ **Feasibility:** likelihood that the project will be completed, is doable
- ✓ **Track record:** recent track record relevant to opportunity
- ✓ **Budget:** is the requested budget reasonable

Some reasons for unsuccessful applications….

- ✗ Objectives inadequately stated
- ✗ Deadline not met, guidelines not followed
- ✗ Unrealistic budget
- ✗ Project predictable, routine or repeats previous research
- ✗ Proposal not sufficiently clear or incomplete in describing the study
- ✗ Study appears beyond the capacity of the applicant to complete
- ✗ Unrealistic timeframe & workload
- ✗ Potential obstacles not discussed
- ✗ Poor presentation & writing, ambiguous and repetitious
- ✗ Partisan, biased position taken
- ✗ Poor rationale & background, lack of understanding of the field

Information taken from *Research Bites*, Issue 10: February 2005.
http://www.phcris.org.au/phcred/research_bites/research_bites_10.pdf