

Grant Writing

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Overview

1. Grant-seeking is a process, not an event--don't prepare a grant 2 days before it's due.
2. Attack problems, not symptoms--effective proposals address underlying problems.
3. Make the match--pick the best funding sources.
4. Remember the reader--make your proposal passionate, not boring!

Overview

Think of grant writing as a form of genre writing.
It is about persuasion.

Agencies have money they wish to give to
researchers.

You must *CONVINCE* them that you have the
skills, resources, commitment and vital project
to justify the grant

Overview

Boils down to three key questions

1.) What exactly do we want to find out?

2.) Why is this worth finding out

3.) How will this be done?

Where to apply?

Use resources wisely

Get to know the people in the university and
hospital research offices

Use internet (Grants web)

Talk to colleagues

Access the usual routes (CIHR)

Think of Foundations

Title

The title states the main purpose or the principal research question. It should be:

- short
- informative
- The title requires much more careful consideration per word than any other section of the application.

Summary

Many, but not all, application forms request a short summary of the protocol. This presents the key parts of the application in miniature.

The summary should

- be a research protocol in miniature
- give the key points only
- not exceed the length or space allowed

Background

- Most application forms have for a section on the background to the research. It is not a personal story about what led to the application. It a description of the scientific background to the research question.

Background

The background gives an introduction to your study. You should include the following:

- The importance of the topic
- A brief review of current research
- The need for further research
- The broad long term goals of proposed research

Aims

This section is where you should list the hypotheses your study will test or the research questions it will address.

- The aims of your study should be
- briefly stated
- seldom number more than four
- DO NOT include aims for which your study cannot provide results.

Plan

- The plan of the investigation presents the study design in detail. It is the longest section of the application, often running to 4 or 5 pages.
- Although the funding body may not ask for it, divide the Plan into several subsections to guide the reader to where key information lies.

Plan

The Plan of the Study should

- give an overview
- specify the study design
- define the study subjects/patients
- describe how the data will be collected
- outline the study procedures
- describe briefly the statistical analysis.

Sample size

Formal sample size calculations are required for all research studies. These indicate how many study subjects are needed so that, if the research ideas are correct, it is very likely that a statistically significant result will be obtained. If the study is too small a real effect may be overlooked. If it is too large, resources will be wasted.

Best Advice: Consult a statistician

Ethics

Timetable

- The timetable should explain what activities will take place at specified times during the study. It may be helpful to use a project management chart to illustrate the timing of activities, particularly if they overlap each other in time. Be sure that the timetable fits exactly with the funding requested.

Milestones

Milestones are an integral part of a project management chart. They are points in time when specified measurable endpoints should have been achieved. For example, milestones might be specified for when various response rates should have been obtained. You can then assess your progress against expectation and know in good time whether or not you will finish the project according to plan.

Existing facilities

It is usually expected that office space and furniture will be supplied. These might include specialised equipment already in your lab or computer software that has already been bought. Alternatively the host institution may be willing to provide a small amount of secretarial support. It is not necessary to make a large contribution to the study but it is important to give the impression that you are not seeking everything down to the last pencil and rubber.

Budget

Don't ask for too much...Don't ask for too little...

Don't ask me how you can tell the difference!

- Here is a list of items you should think about under each section of the financial plan.
- Staff,Salaries,Equipment,Consumables
- Travel and subsistence

Justification of costs

- Funding bodies will meet all reasonable costs encountered during the conduct of a research study. However you must explain why the specified costs are reasonable.
- Key items for justification
- Staff, Equipment, Travel and subsistence
- Minor items

References

- The Vancouver style for references is recommended as it is used by almost all medical journals. It uses numbers in the text and lists the references in numerical order. The advantage of this style in grant applications is that it minimizes the space used for references in the Plan, the one place where space is at a premium.

Who does what?

Many application forms ask how many hours per week the applicants intend to spend supervising the project.

If all the applicants state they will donate one hour per week to the project, funding is unlikely.

The day to day supervision can amount to six to eight hours per week and someone has to take responsibility for it.

If one of the applicants has a particular skill which is central to the project, then that person should volunteer more than this minimum contribution.

Curriculum vitae

- The CV for each applicant should be brief and certainly not more than one page. It should include:
- Your degrees, where obtained and the year awarded.
- Your current and past appointments.
- References to your own papers in the field or related fields.

KTE Plan

- Make it very clear
- Describe target audiences and strategy
- End of Grant vs Integrated?

Pitfalls

- Project Uninspiring
- Overambitious
- Too much detail
- Unclear methodology
- Insufficient expertise

Tips for Success

- Match idea with appropriate funder
- Leave enough time!!!!
- Follow grant instructions precisely
- Write, rewrite, rewrite again
- Get expert and non-expert colleagues to critique
- Access internal review systems
- Keep trying!

CIHR Tips: Empower Yourself: Be Prepared!

- Assess your Readiness to Apply
- Review the Funding Opportunity for Critical Information
- Don't Wait Until the Last Minute

CIHR Tips: Application Content: Success is in the Details

- Read the Instructions Carefully (and be prepared to follow them EXACTLY!)
- Address the Evaluation Criteria
- Substantiate your Claims
- Include Gender and Sex in your Research Design (when appropriate)
- Justify your Team Composition
- Address your Project's Limitations
- Justify your Budget Request
- Address Previous Reviews with Respect

CIHR Tips: Writing and Finalizing

- Engage your Audience: Write with the Reviewer in Mind
- Summaries are More Important than you Might Think
- Have your Application Pre-Reviewed

Resources

- <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45281.html>
- <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/27491.html>