

Writing Grants and for the Peer-Reviewed Literature

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Questions to Ask: Grants

- Before you even begin the process of writing, you need to ask yourself several questions:
 - Is this idea and problem so stimulating and important that I want to spend considerable time thinking, reading and doing?
 - Is this idea and problem so stimulating and important that a funder will want to pay me to spend considerable time thinking, reading and doing?
 - Does the project align with the goals of my organization, my department, institution, and profession?
 - Has this or a similar study been done before?
 - Will my study fill a gap or lead to a greater understanding of the topic? Will my study have an impact?

A Good Grant “FITS”

Fills a gap in knowledge

Important and will make a difference

Tests a hypothesis or concept

Short-term investment by sponsor will lead to a long-term gain for the stakeholders.

Grant Structure

- It depends on the funder (review the RFA and instructions carefully), but most grants have the same basic structure:
 1. Background and Significance;
 2. Goal, Objectives, Activities, Outputs and Outcomes;
 3. Experimental Design, Methods and Alternatives;
 4. Project Evaluation; and
 5. Budget.

Grant Structure (2)

- The goal is the intent or purpose of the project (e.g. what is the problem being addressed?)
- Objectives (specific aims) are the measureable steps towards achieving the goal.
- Activities are a brief description of how you are going to achieve the objectives (e.g. methods, services provided, workshops and educational event held)
- Outputs are the products of the activities.
- Outcomes are the change in knowledge, behavior, circumstances, or attitudes.

What a Good Application Does

1. Establishes the significance of the project.
2. Describes and documents the problem.
3. Reviews the current state of the knowledge in the field.
4. Explains the rationale for the project.
5. Funnels the reader (move from general to specific).
6. Answers the question of why the project must be done.
7. Captures the attention of the reviewers from the first paragraph.

Capturing Attention

- On the very first page(!) you need to:
 1. Clearly define the specific problem you want to solve or an issue you want to address.
 2. Use statistics or preliminary data to support the existence of the problem or issue (do not make assumptions of the reviewers).
 3. Make a connection between the RFA (or mission of the funding agency), the issue or problem, and the goals of your organization.
 4. Provide a statement of need that includes the purpose and goals of the project, measurable objectives, and a compelling logical reason why the proposal should be funded.

Outcomes and Impact

- All funders want to see some consideration of outcomes (as opposed to outputs) in the grant application, such as:
 - Quantitative measurable *benefits* of the research;
 - A measurable change in economic, social, political or environmental conditions;
 - Change in understanding within a discipline; or
 - The application of real, measurable, positive results to meet or resolve a real need as determined by relevant stakeholders.
- Consider providing a list of milestones or other measures of performance.

Budgets

- There are two main categories in budgets:
 - Direct Costs:** Specific costs identified with the project or that can be directly assigned to the activities. These include salaries/wages, travel, equipment, materials and supplies, contracted services, or other costs associated with project procedures and activities.
 - Indirect Costs:** Costs incurred for common or joint activities that cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular project. This is usually a percentage of the direct costs as determined by your institution, but also needs to be negotiated with the funding agency. The funding cap may or may not include indirect costs!
- All budgeted items must be reasonable, justified and allowable under the funding agency's rules.

Why Grants Aren't Funded

- The application is poorly written.
- Measurable outcomes are not provided.
- The budget is inappropriate.
- The application outside the purview of the funding agency.
- The funding agency's priorities and interests have changed.
- The funding agency is not the most appropriate source of funds for the proposed project.
- The applicant has not read or understood the agency's interests and application procedures.

Tips for Writing Competitive Grants

1. Read and re-read the proposal instructions carefully, then follow them to the letter.
2. Make sure that your proposal fits with the mission of the agency and that your objectives match those with the agency. Make this explicit in your application.
3. Find out the median funding level for the agency. This will allow you to formulate a reasonable budget.
4. Contact the relevant agency person and discuss your proposal with them.
5. Find colleagues who have served on, or have received grants from, the agency. Ask them to review drafts of the grant application.

Grant Exercise

Draft a project goal, then list the relevant objectives, activities, outputs and outcomes using a chart like the one below:

Objective	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes
1			
2			
3			