# Grant Writing for Funding Agencies

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## Becoming Familiar with Funding Agency/Organization Policies and Procedures
- Visit the website
- Review application procedures
- Be aware of funding priorities

## Policies and Procedures
- Call the program officer or agency/organization contact person for grants
  - Ask questions about:
    - Specific policies and procedures
    - The best grant mechanisms to use for your proposed grant idea
    - Availability of funding
    - Timeline for how long it will take to receive funding
    - Whether or not your grant idea of programmatic interest
    - Potential collaborators in your area of interest
    - Other agencies that might be interested in your issue/topic
    - Best next steps if your application does not receive a fundable score
  - Become familiar with the forms that are required to submit a grant application
    - Paper application or web based?
    - Number of pages you have to describe your proposed work
    - Type of information required by the funding agency in order to make funding decisions

## Know the Agency/Organization Scientific or Merit Review Process
- Is the applicant a person or an organization/institution?
- Are applications reviewed at specific times of the year?
- How many applications are generally reviewed at the same time?
- Are applications reviewed together on similar or diverse topics?
- How many applications are reviewed each year?
- How many are funded?
- Who makes the final decision about funding priorities?
- Can you talk to that person about level of interest before you submit?

## Pay Attention to the Agency/Organization Review Criteria
- Significance
  - Does this study/grant topic address an important problem?
  - If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or public policy be advanced?

- Approach
  - Are the conceptual framework, design, methods, and evaluation processes adequately developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the goals of the project?
  - Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?
- Innovation
  - Does the project employ novel concepts, approaches or method?
  - Are the goals original and innovative?
  - Does the project challenge existing paradigms or develop new methodologies, models, or technologies?
- Team
  - Is the person(s) responsible for executing the goals of the project/study appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work?
  - Is the work proposed appropriate to his/her experience level?
- Environment
  - Does the environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?
  - Does the proposed work take advantage of unique features of the environment or employ useful collaborative arrangements?
  - Is there evidence of institutional support?

## Important Components in a Grant Proposal
- A new idea
- Logical presentation
- Significance clearly stated
- Relationship to past research or related work delineated
- Proposed activities clearly described
- Justification of resources needed
  - Personnel
  - Equipment
  - Other costs

## What Should a Grant Proposal Convey?
- Enthusiasm/Potential impact
- Very clear theoretical construct or model
- Assurance that the project can be completed as described

## Basic Components
- Title page
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Specific aims or project goals
- Literature review
- Project description
- Budget
- Budget explanation

- Special considerations
- Curriculum vita
- Appendices

**Title**
- Descriptive
- Clear
- Concise
- One sentence
- Avoid:
    - Jargon
    - Words with multiple interpretations
    - Flippancy
    - Controversial terms

**Abstract** (executive summary or summary)
- Purpose:
    - Summarizes key information
    - Explains significance
    - Potential contribution
- First opportunity to get your reader excited about your project
- Content:
    - Overview of the problem
    - Project goals or specific aims
    - Brief summary of procedures and methods
    - Likely outcomes and benefits

**Introduction**
- Purpose
    - Establish your credibility
    - Significance of your ideas
    - How your idea relates to the mission and priorities of funding source (if applicable)
- Content
    - Background
    - Describe goals
    - Establish who you are
        - Emphasize particular expertise
        - Evidence of relevant accomplishments
    - Relate to interests/priorities of funding source
    - Lead logically to the problem statement
    - Present in brief concise manner, avoiding jargon

**Problem Statement**
- Purpose
    - Reason behind your proposal
    - What purpose you hope your funded work will achieve

- Content
    - The "so-what" factor
        - Show problem in the perspective of the larger field
        - State problem generally
            - Betterment of humankind
            - Project's contribution to theory and knowledge of the phenomenon
            - Describe the value of concrete applications of the knowledge

## Literature Review
- Purpose
    - Builds further understanding of the problem
        - Solidly anchored in past work yet moving beyond the work
    - It indicates:
        - One's grasp of the field
        - One's methodological sophistication in critiquing other's work
        - The breadth and depth of one's reading
    - How the project may lead to policy change or improve human health
- Content
    - Review of literature
        - Discuss studies in sufficient detail
            - Summarize pertinent information
            - Describe how your proposed work contributes to previous work
            - Indicate how your work builds upon and/or moves beyond the previous work in the area
            - Point out technical flaws (and describe how your work will avoid these flaws)
            - Include most recent literature
            - Make sure it is relevant
            - Use literature from other disciplines if applicable
            - Mention current unpublished research
            - Thoroughly discuss theoretical basis
                - Describe your model clearly
                - Use graphics/diagrams if possible

## Goals or Specific Aims
- Purpose
    - Form the basis for judging the proposal
    - Outline what you plan to accomplish
    - Demonstrates the appropriateness of the plan's proposed methods

## Goals
- Purpose
    - Theoretical basis for your proposed work
    - Build bridge from theory to implementation
    - Can be evaluated

- o Can be clearly met using the methods your propose
- Format
  - o Specific, concrete, and achievable
  - o 1-2 sentences for each goal
  - o Ordered by importance or contribution
  - o Follow each major goal with its specific sub-goals
  - o Avoid unnecessary wording
  - o Stand out on page
    - Bullets, numbers, and indentations
  - o Flow neatly from one to another

## Project Description
- Purpose
  - o To describe project activities
  - o How goals will be accomplished
  - o Describe the sequences, flow, and interrelationship of activities
  - o Planned staffing
- Procedural Section
  - o Write 1 overview paragraph
  - o Describe:
    - How?
    - When?
    - Why?
    - Where?
- Limits
  - o Design needs to be realistic
    - Level of resources
    - Ethical considerations
    - Access and cooperation to other institutions
    - Time available
- Subsections
  - o Who or what will be evaluated
  - o Design
  - o Data and instrumentation
  - o Analysis or evaluation
  - o Work Plan
  - o Expected end products

## Dissemination of Results
- Remember goal is to have some sort of impact
- Consider how the results will be used
- Communication strategy
  - o Conferences
  - o White paper dissemination
  - o Anticipated journal articles

**Common Weaknesses in Proposal Writing**
- Procedure Section (most common_
  - Insufficient, vague, or unclear description
  - Discrepancies between the objectives and procedures
  - Design flaws
- Problem Section
  - Limited significance Statements were nebulous, diffuse, or unclear
  - Lack of theoretical basis/model poorly explained

**Details Make All the Difference…**
- Avoid Common Errors
  - Literature Review/Purpose
    - Address all study goals
    - Include the most current relevant literature
    - Be well synthesized
  - Goals
    - State clearly
    - Don't have too many
    - Match the study design
  - Preliminary Studies
    - Relevant to proposed work
    - Clearly delineated
    - Include appropriate data
  - Design
    - Appropriate to answer question
    - Described in sufficient detail
      - Outcomes measures
      - Sampling issues
    - Appropriate statistical tools
  - Use spell check
  - Avoid small font size
  - Beware of cut and paste tools
  - Ask a colleague to proof-read for clarity, consistency, and grammar after all major revisions are completed