

African Science Communication Conference

Communicating Science in Grantwriting

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Your Knowledge Partner

WHY A PROPOSAL MAY FAIL

(ONE OR A COMBINATION OF REASONS)



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Based on an analysis of more than 700 proposals rejected by a funding agency in the US, the following were found as reasons for not giving a grant:

λ Inadequate planning/carelessly prepared applications (39%)

λ Competency of applicant not known (38%)

λ Nature of project (18%)



QUESTIONS GRANT REVIEWERS ASK ABOUT PROPOSALS



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- λ Does this project fit funding guidelines and funding areas?**
- λ What is the importance of this project?**
- λ Who is affected by this project?**
- λ Is this project realistic, and are the goals and objectives realistic?**
- λ Does the project give hope?**



- λ Can the timeline be met?**
- λ Is the submitting organisation committed to the project?**
- λ Does this project duplicate others in the field?**
- λ If there is duplication, why is this project stronger?**



- λ Is the staff of the organisation capable and accountable?**
- λ Is the cost of this project justified and realistic?**
- λ Will this project be continued when the money is gone?**
- λ Is there collaboration involved in the project?**



- λ Do the applicants have other financial or in-kind support?**
- λ Is this an all-or-none type of project, or can we choose to fund portions of it?**



Tips for engagement to establish collaboration

- λ Know who you are, what you're good at
- λ Get published and rated (and known)
- λ Use partner-search databases: to see who is out there looking for collaboration. (eg. COS;ResearchAfrica; SciDev)
- λ Register your area of interest and receive regular updates & news
- λ Look at existing projects being funded
- λ Market your expertise – use conferences and networking events
- λ Find good partners!



THE FUNDER



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The first step in making a grant application is understanding exactly what the funder is prepared to fund and why they set up the fund.



Why do funding bodies fund?

- λ **Brief from government to support community activities**
- λ **Sense of civic duty**
- λ **Public relations activity to improve their public profile**
- λ **Want to further their own strategic objective**
- λ **Look for holistic solutions: Inter/cross/multi-disciplinary research**
- λ **Want well planned projects that meet clearly identifiable needs**
- λ **Want to build sustainable, ongoing capacity**
- λ **Want quantifiable, measurable results/outputs within a predetermined time**
- λ **Want cost-effective interventions**



GETTING STARTED

Become familiar with the

FUNDING GUIDELINES

Draw up a check list of what categories of information and what documents are needed



Identify the 5 W's & 2 H's

who,

what,

where,

when,

why,

how,

how much



**Create electronic files according
to the recommended format of
the grant proposal**



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The Title

- λ **The title is the reviewers' first impression of a grant application.**
- λ **The title should stimulate thoughts and sound fascinating. However, a grant proposal title is not a newspaper headline!**
- λ
- λ **The title is the total summary of the proposal and should open a drawer in the readers mind, into which you drop your proposal ideas.**
- λ **Be wary of proposals that phrase titles as questions. Although this style can pique a reader's interest, sometimes the proposal never answers the question!**

Try to keep the title to under 60 characters.



Section 1

1. **Cover page**

2. **Table of contents**

3. **Abstract or summary**

The abstract should be written at the end. Don't use it as a springboard to start off your proposal.

This section should be half to one page long



Recommendation of how to construct your abstract:

1st sentence: a statement of the purpose of the research

2nd sentence: a statement of the importance of the research

3rd to 7th sentences: a summary of the background and feasibility of your project

8th – 10th sentences: a brief description of relevant data,

11th sentence: the target population

12th – 14th sentences: hypotheses

15th – 16th sentences: methodology

17th – 19th sentences: a brief description of evaluation methods and expected results

20th – 25th sentence: a description of the contributions your research will make to the field of knowledge (and health/education/economic) outcomes **words**.

The above should be approximately 300 characters.



Section 2

**Statement of the problem
(eg. background; need for study; target
population)**

This section may take 1-2 pages



Section 3

Goals & Objectives

Identify 2-3 goals with specific objectives under them

This section will be brief, listed as numbered items.

The main difference between goals and objectives is the level of specificity. Objectives should serve as evidence that the goal has been achieved.

Example:

Goal: To demonstrate competency in caring for a hamster

Objectives: To be able to give the correct solids and liquids to the hamster; to know how often to clean the cage



Section 4

Methods

- λ **Methodology**
- λ **Project activities**
- λ **What kind of staff with what credentials will be needed.**
- λ **Who will do what**
- λ **Establish a workplan with activities, timelines and responsibilities (ensuring that it correlates with the Methodology, Who will do What and the Budget).**

This section should be 2-3 pages.



Section 4

Evaluation

One of the most important portions of a funding proposal, it describes measurable outcomes that are expected from the programme.

- λ How will you know that your programme is successful.**
- λ How will you determine that you achieved your goals and objectives.**
- λ How will you measure them.**



Section 5

Budget

- λ **Salary costs** (if grant conditions allow)
- λ **Travel** (itemise, eg. field work, conference attendance, meetings)
- λ **Subsistence** (accommodation, per diem)
- λ **Professional and Technical Services and Contracts** (eg. computer services, expert consulting fees, training of staff)
- λ **Capital equipment** (eg. computer hardware, cameras, tape recorders)
Give a motivation for each piece of equipment.



- λ **Consumables** (Materials that are consumed during the course of the project)

Always indicate the basis for costing.

- λ **Other expenses:**

- **Indirect costs, eg overhead costs** (some institutions ask an overhead cost of 10-20%)
- **In-kind contributions, eg. donated space, materials or time.** This can be either shown in the budget – with corresponding expenses – or could be included in the budget motivation.



Items rarely funded:

- λ **Tuition and course fees**
- λ **Purchase or rental of standard office equipment such as desks, chairs, filing cabinets, photocopiers, fax machines and answering machines**
- λ **Cost of memberships to professional associations**
- λ **Purchase of land**
- λ **Entertainment & catering**



Writing tips

When using acronyms ensure that the full description is first used, with the acronym in brackets. Then subsequently use the acronym.

Eg. The National Research Foundation (NRF) will fund part of this project. The NRF will also provide laboratory space.

Keep sentences short. Read your sentences aloud. If you run out of breath and stumble, your readers' minds may do the same.



Use metaphors, where appropriate

- λ A low-birth-weight baby is one that weighs less than 2500 grams.*
- λ Picture a baby the size of a banana. You can hold her in your palm*



Type style and size

Words in ALL-CAPITAL-LETTERS are rectangles that require reading one letter at a time; so use upper and lower case in the title and throughout the document.

Combining more than three fonts on the same page confuses the eye; so choose a solid plain font and stick to it.

Minimum size for text you want someone to read is 10 point. Rather than reducing type size to fit more text on the page, look for ways to shorten the text.



Some more tips

- λ **Work in increments: When you write, write in *paragraphs*.**
- λ **Write short paragraphs of four to six lines, if possible.**
- λ **Strive for strong 1st-sentences for each paragraph.**
- λ **Don't try to save space by not leaving spaces between paragraphs, thus leaving reviewers with a blur of words to digest.**
- λ **Fill in the blanks on an application form. Write "n/a" (not applicable) where necessary.**
- λ **Use graphs and charts wherever possible.**
- λ **Always include a plan for funding the project after the grant ends. Assure that there will be "life after (the) grant."**



- λ Spelling mistakes, grammatically incorrect sentences, and complicated paragraphs are a few of the blunders that can be avoided.**
- λ No matter how objective reviewers are, if the research plan is poorly organised or poorly written it's bound to colour their opinion: If you're careless with your grantwriting, reviewers will question your abilities in the lab and at the bench.**



LAST, BUT NOT LEAST

Never miss a deadline!



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