

The Art of Writing an Effective Grant Proposal

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Writing an effective grant proposal is one of the most important skills in ensuring a successful career in academia.¹ To acquire funding for research activities, increase visibility of oneself or ones' organization or to facilitate in preparing and launching a product, grant writing has become an essential activity.² The art of convincing funding bodies through persuasive and compelling proposals is all the more important for early-stage researchers willing to progress in their career. What researchers should know is that writing grant proposals is unlike writing research proposals as it requires additional set of skills. Grant writing skills are generally lacking in most of our medical universities. Few commonly observed errors that the researcher makes while filling in the application includes failure to explain project aims clearly, mentioning budgets too high or too low for the project or inability to justify exactly how money will be used. Moreover, poor evaluation plans and failure to justify the need for the project are other major reasons for refusal of a grant. Therefore, to be a successful grant writer, one requires not only expertise in research, but additional attributes too, including patience, clarity, power of persuasion, neatness and the ability to follow directions precisely. So, for writing effectively, the most appropriate advice offered would be to write, rewrite, get feedback and write again!

The problem is, we are rarely given the appropriate writing training to craft clear and persuasive proposals that will ensure securing that grant or fellowship award. Additionally, it is hard to predict what reviewers expect writers to emphasize in their proposals. Do they expect emphasis on the research, the broader impacts, or the professional development of the researcher? Although the format of every proposal depends on organization offering grant and your field of research, however, all contain the same components more

or less - an introduction, a literature review, methodology, your previous research experience, your research plan and a conclusion. All of this information eventually leads to defining the goals and objectives of your research proposal, to state what your research is about, why it's important within and beyond your discipline, and whether you are qualified enough to conduct it.

To facilitate research in third world countries, many funding agencies are operational at both national and international level to overcome this gap but it is painful to witness that both trainers and trainees are not adequately trained to write effective research grant proposals which may convince funding agencies. It is pertinent to mention here that Pakistan has vast resource of data which can be obtained from diverse ethnic groups, based on their cultural norms and diseases of unknown cause that remain unexplored due to lack of awareness, training and funds.

It is time we as health professionals should educate ourselves in writing effective grant proposals and overcome shortcomings in convincing funding agencies to finance our research projects. This will provide a gateway to explore clinical conditions and practices in the far flung areas of Pakistan worth exploring. If given proper training and assistance in writing research grants effectively and timely, the young researchers of our country can accomplish wonders.

Reference

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