Grant Writing: A Template for Success

Johanna L. Hannan, PhD
Assistant Professor
Department of Physiology
Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University
Greenville, NC

@Hannan_lab
THE GRANT CYCLE

HOW IT'S SUPPOSED TO WORK:

WRITE GRANT → GET $ → DO RESEARCH → PUBLISH RESULTS → (REPEAT)
Let’s play!

@redpenblackpen
Tips for grant writing success

1. Find a good idea – Is it WTF proof?
Finding a good idea

• Define a niche to systematically develop

• Collect and critically analyze background information

• Generate a preliminary idea pertinent to your chosen problem
Is my idea WTF proof?

- Would my reviewers think this study is **WORTH** doing?
- Would my reviewers **TRUST** that I can pull this off with the rest of my co-investigators and study team?
- Would my reviewers believe that the study we propose is **FEASIBLE**?
Put together a Grant Advisory Panel (GAP)

• Composed of 3-4 faculty both in and out of your field of research

• Preferably faculty who are successfully funded

• Meet regularly as you are developing your ideas and writing the grant
Specific Aims Page

• **MOST IMPORTANT PAGE OF YOUR GRANT!!!**

• One-page sales pitch of your idea

• Write, read and revise frequently! Get lots of people to read and provide frequent feedback

• Keep it simple
How to write specific aims

- Erika Wolff, PhD – University of Washington
- Not dependent on one another
- Not descriptive (no fishing expeditions!)
- Taken together, they test your overall hypothesis
- Achievable with proposed timeline and budget
How to write specific aims

• Write SMART aims
  S  Specific
  M  Measureable
  A  Attainable
  R  Relevant
  T  Time-bound
Structure of specific aims

- Introduce the problem
- What, why, who
- Payoff and big picture

Paragraph 1: Introduce the problem
Significance

Paragraph 2: What, why, who
Approach (& Investigator)

Paragraph 3: Aim 1
Approach
Aim 2
Aim 3

Paragraph 4: Payoff and big picture
Significance & Innovation
Tips for grant writing success

1. Find a good idea – Is it WTF proof?

2. Find a good home for your grant and get to know your program officer
Find a good home for your grant

• Familiarize yourself with all the different granting agencies and types of grants that are offered
  • NIH, DoD, NSF, AUA, Foundations, Societies

• Find a program looking to fund what you want to propose
  • Sign up for emails or newsletters that announce funding success
    • NIH – sends out weekly notices each Friday at 3pm
    • AUA – EUREKA! Research News & Funding Digest
    • SMSNA – many grants for trainees
    • ISSWSH – trainee research grant for female sexual function (due Dec. 6th, 2019)
Get to know your program officer

• Review panels recommend funding. Program officers (PO) make the funding decisions.

• Schedule a time to talk to your PO and send them your aims page

• They can tell you if your idea is a good fit for that funding mechanism

• Post-review call to find out more about how grant was received
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3. Grant writing is a marathon not a sprint
Grant writing is a marathon not a sprint

• Ideally you will start working on your grant 3-6 months before it is due

• Why???
  • Make sure your idea is a good fit
  • Give yourself time to think
  • Have enough time to get feedback
  • Block time in your calendar to write regularly
  • You need to stay sane during the writing process
Example of a 3 month timeline

MONTH 1: STRATEGIZE, PLAN, AND DRAFT
• Write your one-page Specific Aims and get feedback (GAP)
• Choose the right home for your R01 application (PO)
• Create ‘milestone’ deadlines for yourself based on due date
• Schedule writing time in your calendar
• Write your first (rough) draft of your Research Strategy

MONTH 2: MORE WRITING, THEN FEEDBACK

MONTH 3: REVISE AND REFINE
Writing Accountability Groups (WAG)

• Peer-facilitated, active writing group that meets weekly for 10-12 weeks

• Set overall writing goals you want to achieve over 12 weeks period

• Set weekly goals/updates followed by communal writing session
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4. Write for the reader
Writing for the reader

• Do not make your reviewer work to understand what you are trying to say

• Dr. George Gopen
  • The Science of Scientific Writing (*American Scientist*)
  • If the reader is to grasp what the writer means, the writer must understand what the reader needs
  • Teaches you write to the reader’s expectations
    • Leads to less misunderstanding or assumptions of what the writer
Tips for grant writing success

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3. Grant writing is a marathon not a sprint
4. Write for the reader
5. Practice, practice, practice (submit, submit, submit)
Practice, practice, practice

- Grant writing is an art that takes time and practice to develop
- Start writing early and often
- Get lots of feedback
- Look for grant workshops and writing seminars to keep improving
Submit, submit, submit

• Early career investigators take advantage of 10 year period after training

• You will learn more from comments from reviewers

• Get grant reviewing experience
  • NIH Early Career Reviewer (ECR) Program
  • https://public.csr.nih.gov/ForReviewers/BecomeAReviewer/ECR
YOU MISS 100 PERCENT OF THE SHOTS YOU NEVER TAKE.

- WAYNE GRETZKY