Grant writing, funding and maximizing impact

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The “Art of Grant Writing”

- Empower yourself – readiness and preparedness

https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45281.html
Readiness and preparedness

- Are you eligible to apply for CIHR, other agency funding?
- Does your proposal meet the eligibility requirements of the funding opportunity?
- Do you have the appropriate experience to conduct your research?
- Is your research institution offering you the time, space and facilities to conduct your research?
- If not:
  - Consider co-principal applicant or co-applicant approach
  - Advise from colleagues, your research office
  - Review successful applications

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Readiness and preparedness

- Mindset
- Priority
- Time
- Partnerships
- Resilience

- Culture
- Map/specific details
- Requirements (priorities, partners, matching, …)
Take your time upfront...

- **Key question** – important idea: spell it out, review the current landscape and discuss with your colleagues and partners

- Instructions and **evaluation criteria** (example CIHR)
  - Research Approach
  - Originality of the Proposal
  - Applicant(s)
  - Research Environment
  - Impact of the Research

- **Specific sections**
  - KT plan
  - EDI
  - GSBA
  - Patient partners, community impact
Ready to start

- Be prepared to substantiate your claims – review literature, pilot data, you/your team’s publications (make sure this is in your summary too)
- Be prepared to justify/highlight and praise your team composition
- Be aware and ready to justify your limitations
- Consider your budget and its justification
- Be ready to address previous reviews (if applicable) with respect

- Be absolutely sure you have enough time – consider the internal review and research office signature time commitments
Committed – build your proposal

Proposal structure
- Summary
- Background
- Hypothesis/Rationale
- Progress Report/previous work
- Specific Aims
- Research Plan
- Feasibility
- Significance
- References
Safe your best words and graphics

- **Best words:**
  - First and last sentence for each paragraph (other than research plan)
  - **Summary page**

- **Best, simplest and most impactful graphics:**
  - Emotional hook picture (background)
  - High level research plan
Mindset when writing

- Picture your reviewers and anticipate what they need to see – which panel theme, composition, mandate

- Tell 'em what you're going to tell 'em.
- Tell 'em.
- Tell 'em what you told 'em.

- Use simple, yet compelling language, be clear on your terminology – what is the thing you want to get to (platform, pathway, framework), don’t exaggerate/be humble and rather implicit, don’t kill them with abbreviations
Proposal structure – suggested workflow

- Summary
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- Summary
1. Bucket: Hypothesis/Rationale, Specific Aims & Research Plan

- Formulate your hypothesis/rationale.
- Sometimes an overall aim is added and then divided.
- Decide on a max of three aims that are testable and share how you test them in the heading. Add max 3 sentences of detail. Be careful that the aims are connected but not 100% dependent, they have to be self-contained. Build drama from aim 1 to 3, but be also careful in how you phrase it/don’t overpromise.
- Write the research plan using standard language, be clear – study design, inclusion/exclusion, independent variables/data – what are you collecting and how, outcome – define the primary outcome (this is important for your sample size calculation) and all secondary/exploratory outcomes, analysis – sample size, type of analysis.
- Reassure the reviewer in the plan – refer to existing cohorts, experienced teams/resources etc.
2. Bucket: Background & Progress Report/previous work

- **Build your case** – 3 paragraphs
  - Disease/condition of interest
  - Problem of interest
  - Gap of knowledge

- **Options:**
  - intro-sentence is bolded and provides a summary statement (BF approach)
  - Burden statement first – create a hook, then provide detail and close with a motherhood statement that leads to the next paragraph
  - Use relevant, contemporary references
  - A "hook graphic" could be embedded
UNICEF Report Card
Child Health Ranking for Canada


2020: 12th

2020: 30th

We are a rich country that leaves children behind
2. Bucket: Background & Progress Report/previous work

- Previous work
  - Demonstrate the state of readiness and of solid expertise in max 3 paragraphs
  - Each has to bring a clear message across – consider bolding the message, build drama in the order
  - Create a sense of urgency/readiness to take the next step – the research you are proposing in the application

- **Feasibility**: think about a structure here- why can you do it? You have all components, would map them in bullet point first and make sure you address the feasibility concerns the reviewer may have – can they do the analysis, do they have enough patients, can they engage policy makers? Be proactive in describing the strength of your proposal and team.

- **Significance**: what is the impact of your work, what will change? Think about categories of generation of new knowledge, new partnerships, innovation, quality, cost savings, transformation – whichever words and concepts are the most suitable.

- It is important to align the **letters of support** with these 2 sections in order to support your claims, example: networks that will ensure sufficient enrolment, partnerships for policy change, other.
4. Bucket: Budget, budget justification and Gantt chart or other timeline table

- Budgets need to be reflecting what you need and what you can ask for in details and total. Gantt charts/other timetable depictions or tables of study measure/questionnaires and the collection timepoints are helpful in structuring the process and convey a sense of “operational readiness”

- Budget justifications need to provide details of salary ranges including benefits. The large budget requests (salaries) need to detail what the role/function of this budget item is (why do you need a 0.8FTE?)
5. Bucket: Summary page/graphics

- Get your brain into the best shape possible, do what you have to do to be brilliant – massages, long sleep, run, pedicure, hair dresser – anything

- The summary page is you ticket to funding – everybody reads it on the panel. Often there is a scientific and a lay summary. They don’t have to be an exact translation, make sure the lay summary is lay and compelling for consumers. Don’t forget to have one sentence of your previous work in it. Make sure the aims and research of the proposal and the summary align, the summary aims and the research plan doesn’t need to be as detailed. It just has to have the same message.
Make sure…

- Run the spell check
- Check for abbreviation nightmares – reviewers hate to go back and check … what is CRRT again?
- Send for internal review, select the reviewers wisely, review their suggestions (not all are good!), thank them and re-work the proposal
- Read the proposal out loud – you will find duplications, inconsistencies and gaps every time
- Submit at least 24h before the deadline
Celebrate the submission, send a pdf to your key partners. Be careful what you share with whom though – many should get the summary, a small group the entire grant – otherwise you may see your grant submitted by a collaborator to a funding agency without your knowledge….The proposal is the core teams intellectual property.

- No matter if you/your team gets funded or not – you did a spectacular job!