

Chapter 7.3

How to Write a Successful Grant Application for a Research Study

May Pui Shan Yeung
Emily Y.Y. Chan

Learning objectives

To understand the general components of a grant proposal, by outlining some key principles and tips for success, including:

- Components typically required in a grant proposal.
- Process by which granting decisions are made.
- Tips to increase the chances of success and avoid common mistakes.

Introduction: grants and their purpose

Grant: a monetary award given by a funding body.

Grant application: contains the details of a proposed project, which is used by the funding body to decide whether to award a grant.

Grants are an important financial resource used to:

- Support research
- Enable training
- Facilitate sharing of the latest evidence from research

Introduction: preparing for a grant application

Before applying for a grant, some of the first steps to take are to:

- Recognize a service need or research gap, or have an idea.
- Identify the impacts that the research study might have and work backwards to design a plan for how to achieve these.
- Generate several ideas and narrow these down, based on what is appropriate and feasible.



Introduction: finding opportunities and building a team

- Look for funding opportunities to identify grants that would be suitable for the project and for which the project would be eligible.
- Secure partners to establish a working team, which might include members of the public from the populations that will participate in the research.
- Prepare the grant proposal and address the items as listed.

Grant proposal

- Grant application usually include a research proposal, which summarizes how the proposed project will be planned, implemented, monitored and reported.
- Grant proposals should present an exciting idea for a research study, that has been transformed into achievable actions and that will provide evidence to fill an important gap in knowledge.
- The existence and importance of the gap might be supported by citing existing research.
- Application requirements vary considerably across funding agencies.

Grant proposal: components

- Title
- Summary (sometimes in plain language)
- Introduction and background
- Methods
- Discussion
- Limitations
- Timeline
- Budget
- Ethics considerations
- Information about research team

Grant writing

- Grant proposals should be written in a way that is understandable to a range of audiences.
- They should avoid jargon and use short and clear examples of the problem to be studied.
- If a cover letter is required, it should state the need for the project, what and how the grant will be used, and the benefits to both the researcher and funder.
- Diagrams and infographics are helpful to illustrate complex concepts.

Case study: *Example of a research grant on Health EDRM (1)*

Project title: Optimizing a community-based model for case identification, monitoring, and prevention of hypertension and diabetes among Syrian refugees in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan.

Funder: Elrha's Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises (R2HC) Programme. R2HC is funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Wellcome and the United Kingdom's National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR).

Case study: *Example of a research grant on Health EDRM (2)*

Funder requirements	Project characteristics that match the requirement
Scope: research that will strengthen evidence-based practice around a public health intervention in humanitarian crises.	Research to investigate and improve a community health worker based model for noncommunicable disease care in a humanitarian emergency among Syrian refugees in Jordan.
Impact: demonstrate the potential scale and impact of the proposed research.	The outcomes of this project will be replicable in other contexts (for example, non-refugee emergencies) and will provide a strong case for addressing continuity of care for urban refugees through community health workers.

Case study: Example of a research grant on Health EDRM (3)

Funder requirements	Project characteristics that match the requirement
Methodology: robust innovative methodologies of a standard publishable in peer-reviewed academic journals.	Qualitative and quantitative methods (population-based survey) will be used, including a cost-efficiency analysis. Citing previous work of the research team in the topic area will highlight their experience with the chosen methods.
Partnerships: applicants must have a research team including both a research institution and an operational humanitarian organization	University of Southern California, International Rescue Committee, Jordanian University of Science and Technology, and Brigham and Women's Hospital.
Duration: 36 months.	September 2018 to August 2021.

Funder requirements and suitability (1)

Funders can be government agency, a public or private foundation, or a corporation. Each funder has different requirements for applicants and grants. Looking at previous grants made by the funder can be helpful to see what type of research they are likely to fund.

Grants opportunities can be found through:

- Online sources
- Research offices of academic institutions
- Potential funding agencies

Funder requirements and suitability (2)

Three of the largest funding agencies for health research are:

- National Institutes of Health in the USA
- Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- Wellcome Trust.

The commercial sector is the largest source of research and development funding for health.

Websites for identifying research funders

Funder or organization	Website
Foundation Directory Online	fconline.foundationcenter.org
GrantWatch: Disaster Relief Grants	www.grantwatch.com/cat/48/disaster-relief-grants.html
WHO Centre for Health Development	extranet.who.int/kobe_centre/en/calls-tors

Allocation of grant funding in different phases of the disaster cycle

- There are four phases of the disaster cycle: **prevention**, **preparedness**, **response** and **recovery**.
- Investing in disaster risk reduction (DRR) measures before a disaster is several times more cost effective than funding the response to a disaster.
- However, donations are more common during the response and recovery phases for disasters, rather than the prevention and preparedness phases.
- Finding a way to place prevention and preparedness within response and recovery may increase the chances of success for a grant proposal.

Developing a grant budget

It is important to identify, well ahead of time, the correct amount of funding required for the study. This will ensure that the funding will be sufficient to complete the research.

An effective proposal budget includes:

- Accurate assessment of all expenses and justification for these
- Timeline for the project
- Items for which funding will be requested
- Direct costs (e.g., personnel salaries, equipment, supplies, etc.)
- Indirect/overhead costs (the money needed for the services provided by the host organization)

Grant review process (1)

- Funders choose applicants that have well-organized and compelling ideas, who they feel are capable of successfully implementing the proposed project.
- To increase the chances of success, it is important to strictly follow the proper format for the application and submit all the required materials.
- The process of submitting the application and receiving a decision usually takes 3 to 6 months, but sometimes might take more than a year.

Grant review process (2)



The steps taken after a funder receives the grant application include:

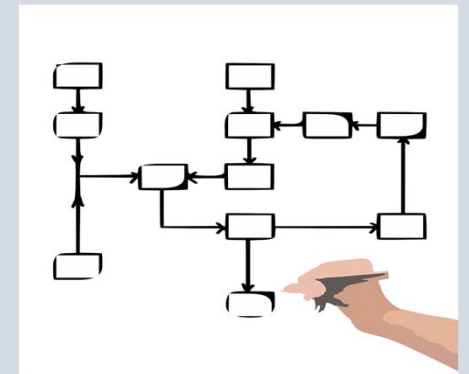
- Application will be checked for completeness and eligibility
- Peer reviewers, a specific funding panel, or both are assigned
- Proposal is assessed against a set of criteria and applicants may be interviewed

Grant review process (3)

- Summary of assessment or peer review is sent to applicants.
- Applicants have the opportunity to respond before the funding decision is made.
- Funder either offers the grant, declines to offer it, or offers a smaller amount of funding than requested.
- Negotiations and adjustments are possible at this time.

Managing a grant

- Good project management and administration is required when implementing a new grant.
- If the grant is for an organization, relevant departments will set up a grant budget account and oversee the logistics of monitoring expenditure.
- It may be necessary to collaborate with the human resources department to hire new personnel.
- Next steps involve applying for ethics approval.



Conclusions (1)

To be successful, a grant proposal must be persuasive, realistic and written in a way that will appeal to the funder.

Tips for success:

- Address the objectives of the grant first
- Identify service and knowledge gaps that the research will fill
- Show preliminary data related to the funding call
- Show the track record of the research team

Conclusions (2)

- Choose and be prepared to train responsive collaborators who will complement the initial team and who will help to complete the project, problem-solve, be flexible and maintain a positive transparent outlook.
- Quantify the potential impact of the research.
- Be clear and easy to understand, illustrate with figures, infographics and photographs.
- Support the application with scientific evidence and relevant references.

Key messages (1)

- A grant proposal summarizes the idea and components of a research study.
- Connections with reliable people with similar research interests and exploration of funding sources in the applicant's area of expertise will help to ensure that there is a good fit between the applicant and the funder.

Key messages (2)

- The eligibility criteria for grants and the requirements of funders vary widely, making it important to check grant criteria carefully.
- Previous grants made by the funder may provide a guide to the type of research they are likely to fund and the content of successful applications.

Further readings

Browning BA. *Grant Writing For Dummies* (6th edn). Hoboken, USA: John Wiley & Sons. 2016.

Introductory guidance on locating, applying for and receiving grants.

Gitlin LN, Lyons KJ. *Successful grant writing: strategies for health and human service professionals* (4th edn). New York, USA: Springer Publishing Company. 2014.

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Guidance on writing grants from a community psychologist's perspective.

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Contact information

Health EDRM Research Network
Secretariat
WHO Centre for Health
Development (WHO Kobe Centre)
Email: wkc_tprn@who.int

