

Accessing Research Grants

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Outline of Presentation

- 1 Introduction
- 2 How do you identify appropriate funders?
- 3 Is there an inappropriate funder?
- 4 How do you write a research proposal?
- 5 How do you write a grant application?
- 6 What should you look out for?
- 7 What help is available within your institution?
- 8 Conclusions

Bibliography

Reading list

Assignment

1. INTRODUCTION

WHY RESEARCH AND WHY MUST RESEARCH BE FUNDED?

- ▶ Research is designed to solve problems for mankind.
- It is a moral obligation for all governments, institutions, organizations, companies and international humanitarian agencies to invest in research.
- ▶ There is therefore a very large amount of fund going into research all over the world.

- It is highly likely you will need to apply for funding
- Possible additional requirements (e.g. progress reports) for funding renewal or to release all the funding
- limited funding vs Increasing competition
- only individuals with the best ideas that can transform into solutions deserve to receive funding for research.



- This emphasizes the need for capacity enhancement of researchers to be able to adequately transform ideas into solution,
- the process of achieving this is known as Grantsmanship
- ***"Grantsmanship is the art of acquiring peer-reviewed research funding"***
- It is the term used for the ability to secure grants to support research projects

Core Grantsmanship capacity requirements

- ▶ The fundamental principles of grant writing
- ▶ How to develop an irresistible, fundable idea for a grant application
- ▶ How to practice the art and ethics of grantsmanship

Current global requirements for fundable research

- ▶ Implementation/intervention/applied research
- ▶ Multidisciplinary research
- ▶ Inter-sectoral research
- ▶ Multi-country research
- ▶ Evidence-to-policy-to-action research
- ▶ With strong monitoring & evaluation (M&E) content
- ▶ **Your target:** to have funded research publications!

WHAT ABOUT TETFUND? SEE GUIDELINE

2. How do you identify appropriate funders?



How to identify appropriate funders?

- Internet search (set up alerts)
- Your institution may have subscribed to websites (e.g. Research Africa)
- Postgraduate/ Research Office
- Synergy between your research project and the strategic imperatives of the funder
- A funder's strategic priorities may change over time
- Be honest with funders
- Check institutional rules regarding funding

3. Is there an inappropriate funder?

- All funders have an agenda
- Attached strings may make the funding inappropriate, examples of possible scenarios:
 - Department of Defence?
 - Investment company?
 - Pharmaceutical company?
 - A commercial company?



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

- Situation gets more complex when viewed from an institutional perspective
- Decision to select a funder may need to be made at a higher level
- Consider the ethics of the end goal – institutional accountability
- Reputation can be destroyed very quickly
- Funding contract

4. WRITING GRANT APPLICATION

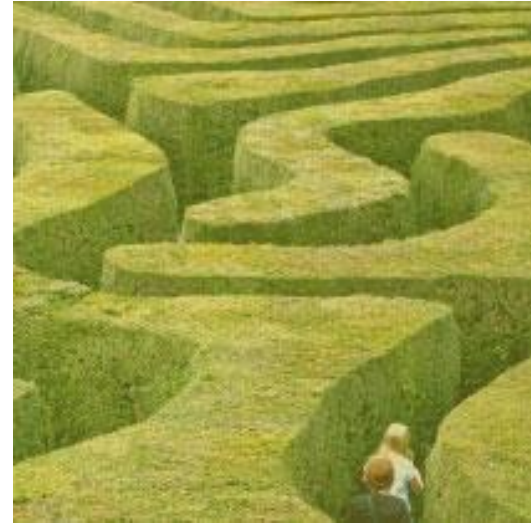
Grant application writing is a serious business!

Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*: 'If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there!'



How do you write a research proposal/Grant Application?

- The research proposal is the most important document guiding your research - a road-map
- It outlines what you are going to do, how and why
- Encourages you to think of the problem, allows you to plan with regard to stakeholders so that you can achieve your objectives within your timelines and budget



- A well-written proposal or grant application is critical in convincing your potential funders
- There is no one standard format of a research proposal
- Important differences between a research proposal submitted for a postgraduate degree and that submitted for funding
- Writing the proposal is an iterative process



Writing Tips

- As a beginner, writing your first research grant proposal can be a very arduous venture.
- Most beginners lack the confidence needed to produce a fundable proposal.
- The truth however is that it is not impossible to obtain a research grant even as a beginner;
- Don't be intimidated because every expert in grantsmanship started somewhere.
- All you need is the requisite skill as well as the necessary capacity for grantsmanship which you can acquire via training and mentorship.
- Realize that writing grants proposal is a serious business that requires **adequate time, concentration and commitment.**

USEFUL TIPS

1. Make Sure You are Eligible:

- Your first step is to determine if your organization and/or your program is a good fit for the grant opportunity you are considering.
- Usually, Foundations and government agencies define eligibility requirements in their proposal packets.

2. Create a Checklist Before You Start Writing:

- Every foundation and government agency that makes grants will have its own list or description of required proposal elements.
- Carefully review the whole proposal packet and create your own checklist of required elements.
- You can check off elements as you complete them.
- Read the general instructions CAREFULLY and follow them EXACTLY.

3. Use Plain Language:

- Do not assume that the reviewers of your proposal understand any slang or technical jargon related to the programs you offer.
- Also, avoid complex words and flowery language. Reviewers are not impressed with big words and complicated sentences.
- Your goal is to get the reviewers to clearly and easily understand your request. Simple and plain is better.

4. Comply with Length and Format Requirements:

- Check for proposal length restrictions and format guidelines in proposal packets.
- E.g., a funder may request that you include an executive summary limited to 1 page or a statement of need that is no longer than 2 pages.
- They may also request proposal elements in a specific order. Make sure you comply with any length restrictions and format guidelines.
- If there are no specific written requirements in the proposal packet, contact the funders and ask about their expectations, if possible.

5. Easy to Read – you can make your proposal easier to read by:

- Using short paragraphs
- Creating clear titles and subtitles to label each section
- Avoid overuse of bold text, all capital letters and underlines – do not try to emphasize everything
- Do not try to cram two pages of information on 1 page – use reasonable page margins and spacing between your paragraphs
- Font size should be 11 points or larger

6. No Desperation:

- You want your proposal to grab the attention of the reviewers and you want to make a compelling case for funding, but you do not want to give the reviewers the impression that you are desperate.
- Reviewers are likely to see that as a sign of organizational instability or weakness.

7. Keep it Real:

- Don't embellish or exaggerate any part of your proposal.
- Reviewers know that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is.

8. Find a Good Editor:

- Extensive and intensive internal peer-review is essential.
- Some people are better writers than others. If you are not a confident writer find someone you know who is.
- Ask them to review and edit your proposal to improve the organization and clarity of the document, word usage, sentence structure, style, grammar, spelling, etc.
- A poorly written document will hurt your chances of success.

9. Quality Materials:

- Your proposal document does not need to be fancy but it should be clean and neat.
- Use good quality paper and get a good clean copy from your printer.

10. Comply with Submission Requirements:

Each donor has its own proposal submission instructions. Typical types of requirements you will find include:

- Number of proposal copies that must be submitted
- Bound or unbound
- Submission deadlines
- Submission address
- Submission methods (in-person delivery, mail, etc.)

- Cover Letters or Forms (some funders have their own cover form or letter that they require you to complete and place in the front of your proposal)
 - Budget Forms (some may require you to use their budget worksheets and forms)
 - Attachments (specific information they want attached to your proposal, some examples are financial statements, legal documents, etc.)
 - Any Other Submission Requirements (before you submit, make a checklist of all the submission requirements)
 - If attachments and/or appendices are not allowed, do not submit them.
 - Do not submit additional information after the deadline (unless explicitly allowed).

11. Understand the review requirements:

- Remember that the reviewers are doing the reviews as a task over and above their daily mandated activities, and are often unpaid.
 - They may be overwhelmed with applications and manuscripts requiring reviews.
 - They often carry out the reviews under less-than-ideal conditions (evenings, weekends, holidays, at meetings, or even on the way to review committee meetings).
 - They may wait until the last minute to begin their review.
- Reviewers often do their reading in bits-and-pieces.
- Have your application so organized so that it can be read in this way. You do not want them to have to go back to the beginning after each break.
 - Assume that you are writing for a reviewer in a somewhat related field, rather than for an expert directly in your area.

5.0 COMMON ERRORS MADE

There are a number of common errors that are made by grant applicants and these errors have led to the rejection of proposals. Kraicer (1997), outlined some of these errors as follows:

Errors by New Applicants

- The proposal includes a lifetime's work and is **unrealistically ambitious**.
- There are no clearly defined priorities and the timetable (if present) is unrealistic, with no sense of what can realistically be accomplished during the term of the grant.
- The literature and background **reviews are uncritical**. They read like an undergraduate review.
- There are no results of pilot studies or other preliminary data.
- The time listed to be spent on research should **be at least 50%**, and preferably over 75%. Anything less than 50% may be unacceptable (a smaller percent effort is usually acceptable for established investigators).
- The budget is unrealistic.

Errors by Established Investigators

- The application is fragmented and disjointed. Different parts were obviously written by different junior colleagues and then hastily assembled by the applicant.
- "I don't have to go into detail. Trust me and examine my track record. Rely on my reputation". This no longer works.
- The proposals tend to be too cautious and do not venture into new and unexplored areas.
- They tend to be "more of the same".

TEN MOST COMMON REASONS WHY PROPOSALS ARE REJECTED

- 1) The organization does not meet the priorities of the funders:** Make sure there is a good match between your program and the funding priorities of the foundation.
- 2) The organization is not located in our geographic area of funding:** Some foundations will only fund in a specific geographic region.
- 3) The proposal does not follow our prescribed format -** Follow instructions carefully. You must write your proposal using the exact format and order (and length) that the funder requires.

4) The proposal is poorly written and difficult to understand:

- Funders rely on proposals to make decisions about who will receive their grants.
- They are unlikely to take a chance on your organization if your proposal does not clearly describe the community need, your program solution and your ability to perform.

5) The proposed budget and grant request is not within our funding range:

- Your budget request could be too big or too small for a particular funder.

6) We don't know these people – are they credible?

- If possible meet with the funder before you submit your proposal to establish the credibility of your board and your organization.
- Establishing credibility will take time and honest discussions to build a relationship based on mutual interests (helping others) and trust

7) The proposal doesn't seem urgent – and I'm not sure it will have an impact:

- Your proposal needs to be convincing.
- Your arguments need to be clear and the readers must be able to see a strong connection between your program activities and significant community benefits

8) The objectives and plan of action of the project greatly exceed the budget and timelines for implementation:

- You need to be realistic.
- Make sure your goals, objectives and activities are reasonable and realistic for the budget and the grant time period.
- If your proposal is exaggerated it will not be taken seriously.

9) We've allocated all the money for this grant cycle:

- There will always be more requests than grants awarded.
- Do not take it personally.
- Evaluate your proposal, make improvements and try again at the next grant cycle.

10) There is insufficient evidence that the program will become self-sufficient after the grant is completed:

- Many foundations want to know how the program will survive after their grant funds are spent.
- Make sure you have a longer-term plan for funds included in your proposal.



1. How to write a grant application?

- Before applying, read the funder's eligibility criteria carefully
- Is your project going to help address the goals of the funding body?
- Be aware of the requirements of the funding body
- Follow the funder's guidelines for each section, especially the budget (inclusions, exclusions, limits).
Your Postgraduate/ Research Office can help you

2. Writing instructions

- You must spend enough time and effort writing your grant application
- It must:
 - Be free from spelling and grammatical mistakes
 - Be comprehensive, comply with the funder's requirements
 - Be persuasive
 - Show you have planned your research project thoroughly
- No errors in your budget
- Do not “copy and paste”
- Write it in advance and get feedback from others
- Write with an audience in mind
- Readable to both a subject matter expert and someone who is not

- Acronyms/ abbreviations: write out in full the first time
- Use headings and sub-headings
- Summarise points using bullets (Roman numerals) or CAPITALISE
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- No blank spaces. Rather say 'Not applicable'
- Be succinct
- Comply with specific guidelines, e.g. font size and type, line spacing, margins, numbering
- With online applications, be aware of word count limits
- Use an appropriate name for your application when submitting electronically, e.g. NAME - FUNDING INSTITUTION - Call X - YEAR

3. Importance of your research group appearing credible and competent

- Also needs to offer something unique
- Project must still be practical and achievable (SMART)
- Highlight your and your team's credentials, expertise and competence for this project
- Demonstrate the ongoing feasibility of the project in terms of infrastructure, equipment, consumables and expertise
- Good idea to find collaborators

4 Planning the grant application

Before the funding call is open:

- Do not wait for a funding call before you develop an outline of your proposed research
- Give yourself time to conceptualise your project well and do background reading

When the call opens:

- Establish a timeline with deadlines leading up to the submission date of the application
- List all the documents needed
- There may be an internal institutional deadline as well as final funding deadline

Submission:

- Plan to complete your application at least a few days prior to the submission deadline
- Funders may reside in a different time zone- it is the funder's time zone and not yours that is relevant

5. Components of a typical grant application

(based on Cassim, 2011b)

a) Short cover letter

- Provides a first impression of you and your project
- Use it as an opportunity to introduce the reader to your project and gain interest

b) Title

- Must be descriptive and summarise the essence of the project and its significance
- Cannot be too long
- May have a main title with a colon and sub-title

c) Executive summary or abstract

- Summarises the main points of your application
- Funding body would state how long this has to be
- Written last but read first
- Stand-alone piece of writing
- If the abstract is poorly written, the reader may not want to read the rest of your application
- Must be concise
- Must be memorable

Identify yourself and indicate your credibility

- Then address the following 5 issues:
 1. What are you going to do?
 2. Why is it important?
 3. How are you going to do it?
 4. What difference will it make?
 5. How will you evaluate it?

d) Project information

- You may be required to specify the funding area into which your project falls
- Helps the funding body route your application
- Be as specific as possible, e.g. Paediatric Endocrinology
- Be aware of the funder's different research areas, which may have different reference numbers or codes (see funder's website)

CATEGORIES AND THEMATIC AREAS OF THE NATIONAL RESEARCH FUND (TETFund)

	Main Thematic Area	Research Focus Area
National Research Fund	Humanities & Social Sciences	National Security
		National Integration & Peace Studies
		Education & Training
		Economic Development
		Social Welfare
		Population Studies
		Tourism
	Science, Technology & Innovation	Agriculture, Food Security & Food Technology/Processing
		Health
		Transportation
		Power & Energy
		Engineering: Construction & Building Technology
		ICT & Telecommunications
		Space Science
		Geological Sciences
	Cross-Cutting	Entrepreneurship & Wealth Creation
		Environment, Housing & Urban Development
		Climate Change
		Resource Governance
		Science & Technology Management
		Sports and Recreational Development

Details of research

This is a crucial part of the application and you need to provide as much detail as possible (especially regarding research design and methodology)



i) Problem identification

- Includes a short background section
- Develop your own conceptual framework
- Highlight the gap in the existing body of knowledge
- End off by stating your research question, problem statement and hypotheses

ii) Rationale and motivation



Discuss why it's important to fill the gap in the existing body of knowledge



Mention the benefits and significance of your project



Make sure your research is innovative and has an impact beyond the field

iii) Research aims and objectives

- As stated before– aims are broad and are broken down into more specific objectives
- Objectives can be categorised into different phases (1, 2, 3...) with small steps (1.1, 1.2, 1.3...).
- These will form part of your progress reports

iv) Work plan research activities

- Be descriptive and specific
- Give a detailed research design and methodology
- **Research design** = choice of research methods
- **Methodology** = step-by-step sequence of activities
- Each activity can be broken down further into tasks
- Allows reviewers to have more confidence in your ability, and helps to focus your energy and resources
- Must justify your activities

v) Work plan research activities (Cont.)

- Include a **Schedule** and **Work Plan** showing the order, timing and duration of various activities
- Be realistic
- Clarify activities
- For each key activity, think about resources
- Each activity will be tightly linked to items in your budget later
- Detail each activity in terms of timing, purpose and method, responsibilities/ participants (cross-reference to later section on Participating members)

vi) Monitoring and evaluation plan and Quality control plan

- **M&E plan:** details how you will monitor your progress to ensure the project remains on track
- **Quality control plan:** details the activities you will take to ensure that your research is conducted according to the standard you have set and that your research output meets these standards
- Having a structured quality control process enhances credibility and validity and highlights potential problems

Potential outcomes or impact

- What are the possible effects of your project, both expected and unexpected?
- Assert the significance of your research
- Sometimes funders refer to this as a 'Pathways to impact' statement
- Identify outcomes that could have a negative effect, which you could then work on addressing. E.g. environmental harm, negative effects on community relations

Research outputs

- The specific, tangible academic research products you would like to generate by the end of your project
- Give details for each of these outputs
- Mention ‘milestones’ – outputs at specific points
- Adhere to the ‘**SMART**’ principle, as the funding body will hold you accountable for your stated outputs

Progress to date

- This summarises the progress you have already made in investigating your research question
- Very important if your application is for a renewal of funding:
 - Have you achieved your stated research outputs in the period since your last application?
 - If not, why? Be honest about problems you have encountered

Xi Funding track record



- What funding have you received in the past and how does it compare to what you are applying for now?
- Have you received grants from the same funding body you are applying to now?
- This creates a track record of you as a researcher

xii) Ethical clearance

- You may need to apply to the Ethics Committee of your institution as well as other bodies (see 2.4.14) for approval to conduct the research
- Many journals will not publish papers on studies that have not been granted ethical clearance
- Mention if you have already received ethical clearance
- Ethical clearance is seldom given retrospectively
- No data collection can commence without ethical approval



xiii) Participating members

- Who are your project team members and collaborators?
- List their names, affiliations, roles and responsibilities
- Mention them in narratives and activities
- Make sure that they have agreed to collaborate with you before you mention them in your grant application





xiv) Possible reviewers

- Identify external reviewers, who are usually experts
- Collaborators cannot be reviewers due to a conflict of interest
- Reviewers should have expertise without being linked to you
- May have one person from your university as a reviewer

xv) Financials: operating costs

- Have a strong budget that corresponds to your project
- There should be no surprises
- Budget should relate to your work plans
- Relate the key activities on your timeline to associated costs:
 - Direct costs (e.g. running expenses)
 - Indirect costs (e.g. student bursaries)
- Operational costs are the costs of running the project

- Be realistic
- Your budget should be so well constructed that you should be able to proceed even if you do not obtain all the funding for which you have applied
- Often researchers ignore significant costs
- Include a short motivation/ justification for each cost



- Provide invoices/ quotations from a number of suppliers where possible
- Take into account inflation and exchange rates
- Find out the funder's policy on paying indirect costs. Is this acceptable?
- The opportunity cost of time is often ignored
- Be aware of budget categories

Example of a basic budget

YEAR ONE			
	Unit cost	Total	Total
Operational costs			
Purchase of high-performance liquid chromatography equipment <i>(for chemical analysis of drug metabolites in Experiment 2)</i>	R57500.00 <i>(see Quotation 1 in Appendix C)</i>	R57500.00	
Training on usage of above equipment <i>(half-day training session provided by a local expert)</i>	R3000.00 <i>(see Quotation 2 in Appendix C)</i>	R3000.00	
Maintenance of equipment <i>(two six-monthly inspections by the supplier)</i>	R8200.00 per inspection <i>(see Quotation 3 in Appendix C)</i>	R16400.00	
Purchase of two computers <i>(for researchers to use to analyse data and write up research reports)</i>	R4999.00 per laptop <i>(see Quotation 4 in Appendix C)</i>	R9998.00	
Stipends for five researchers <i>(to cover rent in Johannesburg and a basic salary for a total of 5 months)</i>	R50000.00 per researcher <i>(see rental costs and cost of living in Quotation 5 in Appendix C)</i>	R250000.00	
Airline costs (Johannesburg to Durban) for one researcher to make three trips <i>(to conduct interviews as part of Method 3 in February, June and October 2015)</i>	R1350.40 for Feb trip; R1680.90 for June trip; R1750.00 for Oct trip <i>(see Quotation 6 in Appendix C)</i>	R4781.30	

YEAR ONE			
	Unit cost	Total	Total
Operational costs continued			
Car hire for three trips (<i>for above three trips to Durban- each trip is expected to be 2 days long</i>)	R410.55 per trip (see Quotation 7 in Appendix C)	R821.10	
Accommodation for above three trips (<i>includes accommodation on a dinner, bed and breakfast basis for one researcher</i>)	R1800.00 per trip (see Quotation 8 in Appendix C)	R5400.00	
Administrative costs (<i>national telephone calls, e.g. in arranging Durban visits and liaising with research project team; printing project documentation, e.g. interview sheets; faxing order forms; purchase of stationery</i>)	R2000.00	R2000.00	
Fees for two interview translators (<i>for each of the three above trips</i>)	R450.00 per translator per trip (<i>according to Ethics Policy of institution outlined in Appendix B</i>)	R2700.00	
Cost recovery (<i>fee paid to the institution to administer the research funds received</i>)	R5000.00 (<i>according to institutional policy on Research Funding outlined in Appendix B</i>)	R5000.00	
			R357600.40

YEAR TWO			
	Unit cost	Total	Total
Operational costs			
Stipends for three researchers (<i>to cover rent in Johannesburg and a basic salary for a total of 5 months</i>)	R55000.00 per student (see Quotation 9 in Appendix C)	R165000.00	
Administrative costs (<i>national telephone calls, e.g. liaising with research project team; printing project documentation; faxing order forms; purchase of stationery</i>)	R3000.00	R3000.00	
Maintenance of equipment (<i>two six-monthly inspections by the supplier</i>)	R9400.00 per inspection (see Quotation 10 in Appendix C)	R18800.00	
Cost of time of statistician for data analysis (<i>for five days of data analysis</i>)	R10000.00 (see Quotation 11 in Appendix C)	R10000.00	
			<u>R196800.00</u>
Total cost for two years			<u>R554400.40</u>

xvii) Financials: other sources

- What other funding have you applied for?
- What have you received?

xviii) Other components

- Glossary, List of references/ Bibliography and Appendices
- Funders may also ask for other information, e.g. data management plan, how you will meet open access requirements, research uptake plan (how stakeholders will use your findings)

6. What should you look out for?

- Be aware of the terms and conditions of your funding
- Key project management principles allow you to complete your project within budget and according to the time frames and quality standards you and your funder have agreed upon.

7. What help is available within your institution?

Postgraduate/ Research Office:

- Can give you information about funding opportunities and help you complete your grant application
- May also organise skills development initiatives, such as workshops

Subscribe to this Office's newsletter, email alerts or social media updates

Can also learn about potential collaborators

8 Conclusions

You should now be in a better position to:

- Identify appropriate potential funders
- Write a well-conceptualised research proposal that shows your funders how you will execute your research project
- Compile a comprehensive grant application that meets the funder's requirements

Assignment

- Complete a grant application:
 - Identify 2 funders in your research area by:
 - Using websites of, for example, Research Professional Africa, DAAD and NIH
 - Visiting your Postgraduate/ Research Office
 - Make sure you are aware of funder's requirements
 - Draft 1 grant application for 1 of the above funders (you have 2 weeks)
 - When you submit it online, also include a separate document with the funder's requirements
 - Evaluation matrix will be made available to you

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