Major Sections Commonly Included in Grant Proposals

The format for your proposal will vary depending on the funding source. Always check carefully to be certain that you are following the guidelines provided for your granting agency and mechanism. The following information, however, is commonly requested.

Title. Generally 10 words or less. Should be descriptive and grab attention. Try to make the reader want more.

Abstract or Summary. Usually about 200-300 words. A brief outline of the project that should provide some context for the project, information on what is proposed, the expected effects or findings, and some sense of the project significance.

Statement of the problem/Specific aims. What do you plan to do? What questions are you asking in the research or issues are you addressing with this program? What are your goals? What do you expect to find or demonstrate?

- State your objectives clearly, using specific and concrete terms. Use measurable concepts in stating objectives.
- State your objectives in declarative form.
- List your objectives in order of priority, and follow this order throughout the proposal (i.e., use parallel structure).

Hypotheses or Expectations. What answers are you proposing for the research question(s) and why? Why do you think this program will be effective?

- A hypothesis describes a relationship between two or more variables. A variable is a construct (or phenomenon or entity) that can take on different levels, quantities, or forms.
- In your hypotheses, identify variables at a conceptual level but also link them to likely empirical observation.
- Be sure that the relationships among the variables (and any predicted changes in relationships) are identifiable both conceptually and operationally. Hypotheses should be testable, including capable of being falsified.
- Order your hypotheses to correspond to your already-stated research questions.

Conceptual Framework or Logic Model. Why are you attempting to answer your research or program question(s) in this way? (Why did you propose these hypotheses?)

- Clearly outline the conceptual framework (this could be a theory, a model, etc.) from which your hypotheses are derived. If the theory or program is new, clearly explain it in detail. If the theory or program is already established, explain how its application to this topic is appropriate, useful for solving the problem, and/or will enhance the theory.

- In this section you link your theoretical hypotheses to empirical hypotheses. A theoretical hypothesis is stated in conceptual, abstract terms, whereas an empirical hypothesis is stated in operational, testable terms.

Review of *RELEVANT* literature.

- How have these questions been addressed or answered before? What similar programs exist? Have related questions been asked or programs proposed (e.g., with different populations)? What answers have been obtained?
- What are the limitations and opportunities from past research and practice?
- How does your proposal build on past strengths while overcoming limitations? Why is it worth pursuing (or even necessary to pursue)?
- Your review of previous research and programs should be critical and evaluative, and it should be synthesizing rather than comprehensive.
- Maintain parallel structure in this section. Discuss the literature relevant to each of your questions (or hypotheses) in the order in which they are posed.

Preliminary research or program experience. Describe any previous work you have done in the area or that is related to the proposal. In discussing this work, be sure to underscore how it helps set the stage or is linked to what you are proposing.

Approach; method and design. How will you test your hypotheses and answer your research questions? What are the key components of your proposed program and how will they be implemented? *BE SPECIFIC AND DETAILED; JUSTIFY YOUR DECISIONS.*

- Operationalize all variables; justify your leap from theoretical to empirical hypotheses.
- Identify the appropriate population from which you will sample for your research or on which you will implement your proposed program. Discuss sampling procedures and inclusion and exclusion criteria.
- Identify the techniques, methods, and instruments you will use, including the tests/scales/questionnaires and procedures you will use. Explain why they are appropriate.
- Describe the procedures you will use to collect data. Tell a story (especially from the participant's perspective). There are two common strategies for organizing this section: a) structured by research question or b) following the chronological sequence of events as they will happen. Choose the most effective strategy for your proposal.
- Discuss the appropriateness of your specific instruments and procedures, including methods of evaluation. What are the actual data to be collected?
- If appropriate, discuss controls in your research design or sources of data that you will collect for control purposes.
- Construct a timeline or schedule for your research (e.g., month-by-month). How long will the entire project take to complete? What are important benchmarks along the way? You may wish to include a graph or figure that details this information.

- Discuss your contingency plans. What could go wrong, and what will you do to insure the successful completion of the project?

Data analysis or evaluation plan. Describe your general approach to the data and how you will evaluate your hypotheses/address your research questions or establish the effectiveness of your program.

- How will you analyze your data (how will you know whether or not you have answered your research questions)? What statistical methods, if any, will be used?
- Describe specific data analytic techniques and why they are appropriate.
- Include information on the power or sensitivity of your analytic plan.

Significance. Why are your questions and answers important? There are multiple dimensions for potential significance.

- *Theoretical significance*: What contributions will there be to basic knowledge?
- *Methodological significance*: Describe any new methods that will be developed or old methods that will be adapted in novel ways.
- *Applied significance*: How does your research provide a solution for a specific real-world problem?
- *Social significance*: Describe the benefits to society at large for the research you plan to conduct or program that you plan to implement.

Dissemination Plan. What will you do with your results? If appropriate, how will you disseminate them to different audiences and stakeholders?

Bibliography. References cited in the proposal.

Key Personnel. Who will do the research or implement the program? Include a brief biographical sketch for each person who fills essential or key roles; these tend to be the Principal Investigator and Co-Investigators. Be sure that each sketch outlines relevant information that justifies their inclusion on your project team.

Other Support. List of current and pending funding held by key personnel on the proposed project. This list of other support should include information on the funding source, scope of project, and commitment of the member(s) of the project team. It is especially important to indicate if there is scientific or program overlap between currently funded or pending projects and the proposed project.

Resources and Environment (Facilities). Where will you do the research or implement the program? Describe the space available for the project, accessibility to participants, computer facilities, and other relevant resources in the environment (e.g., library, history of similar programs).

Budget and justification.   How much will it cost to conduct the proposed project? These are direct costs. If applicable, separately include indirect costs and how they were computed.

- Personnel, including the amount of time to be spent on the project and applicable pay rates
- Equipment
- Supplies (nondurable, consumable items)
- Travel
- Contracts with other organizations
- Other (e.g., participant payment, postage, photocopying, sampling lists)

Supporting documentation. Generally, appendix material. Examples of this material include any of the following items:

- draft questionnaires or program materials
- letters of cooperation or support, including from:
    - your institution (e.g., for matching funds or in-kind donations)
    - institutions from which respondents will be solicited or recruited
    - contracting organizations, including co-investigators and subcontracts
    - community groups or others recognized as having a strong interest in this type of research or program
    - advisory board or consultants (e.g., consumers or stakeholders in an organization, people affected by the disease being studied)
- IRB or other regulatory approvals
- Graphic depictions of conceptual model, timeline, etc. (if not already in proposal)