Ten Tips for Writing a Winning Proposal

It takes more than good ideas to get funding for your research. You need to explain your good ideas to a panel of reviewers in a way that will convince them that your work is important and that it will likely succeed. As you prepare your proposal, keep the following points in mind. Remember, many ideas fail to gain support not because they were not good ideas but because they were not clearly and convincingly presented.

1. Write with your reviewers in mind.
- Make sure your argument is easy to follow and clear.
- Do not waste the time of your reviewers; get right to the point.
- Include only essential information.
- Write in a clear, engaging style.

2. Formulate clear research questions early in your proposal.
- What do you want to know?
- Why is it important to gain the insights or information you are seeking?

3. Be explicit about the relevance of your work to the RFA Research Objectives.
- Which areas of interest are you addressing?
- How will your proposal further the objectives of the RRI Program?
- Is you work relevant to a particular agency? If so, be explicit about this connection.
- How will your research help promote integrity in HHS-sponsored research?

4. List and discuss prior research that has been done by you and others.
- Where does you proposed work stand in relation to other similar research?
- What conclusions has prior research reached?
- How will your work build on and advance research in your particular area?

5. Make sure your research methods are clearly described, understandable and realistic?
- Provide a clear outline of what you will do and when.
- Give sufficient detail so a reviewer can judge the feasibility of your work.
- Anticipate questions about your methods and try to answer them.

6. Make sure you research team has the expertise needed to carry out the work.
- Be explicit about who will do what work.
- Provide information that will allow others to assess the abilities of your research team.

7. Discuss limitations and possible problems and how you will deal with them.
- What problems might you encounter in your research?
- How will you deal with these problems?
- Are their important questions that you will not be able to answer during the proposed research?

8. Make sure your abstract clearly and precisely summaries you project.
- Briefly summarize your aims, methods, and anticipate conclusions.
- Take care to avoid technical language that makes your abstract difficult to understand.

9. Carefully check your application for grammar, style, and argument.
- Have you described your research in a logical order?

- Are your paragraphs clear and organized around a single point?
- Have you check carefully for careless errors, the misuse of words, and other common writing problems?

10. Have someone who is not familiar with you work read over your proposal for clarity and style.
- Can someone who is not familiar with you work follow your description of your proposal?
- Did they find your proposal interesting and easy to read?