

Checklist for Grant Proposal: Mandatory Elements

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Medha Rajappa

For every minute spent in organizing, an hour is earned
Benjamin Franklin



Checklist for grant proposal-mandatory elements

M. Rajappa (✉)

Department of Biochemistry, Jawaharlal Institute of Postgraduate Medical Education and Research (JIPMER), Pondicherry, India

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Objectives

- To list the essential elements of the checklist for grant writing.
- To understand the requirements for successful grant writing.

This chapter deals with the essential elements of the grant application checklist, based on the guidelines available in various grant agencies [1–6] to get you a successful grant award. A checklist (Table 14.1) is provided at the end of the chapter, which lists these key elements and will be very useful for investigators who want to be successful in the award of grants. These suggestions are only a lead for you to understand this process, and the investigator is advised to familiarize yourself with the funding agency guidelines for their specific grant application process and ensuring compliance with the guidelines of the funding agency is most vital for the success of grant award.

Table 14.1 Checklist for grant proposal—mandatory elements

S. no.	Items	Yes/ no
1	Novel ideas important in the context of the health needs of the country	
2	Grant idea driven by a strong hypothesis	
3	Logical rationale for project hypothesis	
4	Proposal fits with local, regional, and national priorities with relevant public health impact	
5	Work plan and methodology adequate to prove the project hypothesis	
6	Timelines and budget realistic and adequate to answer the research question	
7	Clear and concise, neat and well-organized proposal, with all headings filled-in with adherence to template and word counts as per the latest guidelines of funding agency	
8	Diagrams, graphical summary, flow charts, and concept maps to add clarity and visual appeal	
9	Multidisciplinary team with the expertise to carry out the work plan	
10	Adequate documentation for necessary approvals (IEC/IAEC/IBSC) and MOUs delineating the roles and responsibilities of each institution in the project	
11	Language, spelling, and grammar check for the grant proposal with font type and size as per the guidelines given	
12	Preliminary data from pilot studies to support the idea under consideration	
13	Linking of individual objectives, methods, and project outcomes to provide more clarity on the research question under consideration for funding	
14	Review of literature adequate to show the lacunae in the existing body of work	
15	Citations as per the required format of the funding agency guidelines	
16	Adequate time (at least 3–6 months) for planning, writing, reviewing, and revising the grant proposal	
17	Biographies of investigator team with adequate details regarding training, expertise, ability to lead a team, details of ongoing and completed funded grants and publication details from the last 5 years relevant to the proposed work	

14.1 Essential Elements for Grant Writing Application

Every grant starts with a seed, an idea that has germinated in the mind of the Principal Investigator. This idea should be novel, doable, and considered important in the context of the health needs of the country. So first, work on the idea and try to write a concept note which conveys the idea concisely, with all the required headings filled in as per agency guidelines. Contact the Program Officer of the agency (if allowed) and get feedback on the idea, your queries, and the funding opportunity in the agency to which you intend to submit the grant. Check the existing literature in your interest to check if the idea is novel. Ensure that your grant idea is driven by a strong hypothesis and that you are able to define what you are setting out to establish. Provide a logical rationale for your hypothesis. Explain how the proposal fits with local, regional, and national priorities and ensure that its public health impact is laid down clearly to the reviewers of the project. Ensure that your methods are adequate to prove your hypothesis. Ensure that the timelines and the resources requested are adequate to answer your research question. In short, the proposed initiative should be considered novel and doable. Those are the keywords to be kept in mind during grant writing.

Next, follow all the guidelines given by the funding agency on their website and ensure that you get ready a clear and concise, neat, well-organized, and visually appealing proposal, with all headings filled in as per the guidelines. Make bullet points, diagrams, graphical summary, flow charts, and concept maps to convey your idea to the grant agency and to sell your idea as doable and contextual in the background of the health priority needs of your country. Ensure a realistic grant work plan, timeline, and budget for the project. Set up a multidisciplinary team with the expertise to carry out the work plan, and this could be inter-institutional or from your own institution, depending on your project needs. Ensure that the adequate documentation for roles and responsibilities of each institution is well delineated in the final draft. Ensure that a preliminary review of the project is done by an expert team from your own institution or collaborators, whose suggestions can be used for the betterment of the project plan. Ensure that you check the websites of the funding agencies on a regular basis to get an idea of the latest funding opportunities and call for proposals that the agency funds based on the health priorities and needs of the community in the country. Depending on the specific research idea, it is good to get the documentation required, such as the approval of the Research Advisory Committee, Institutional Ethics Committee for human/animal research/Institute Biosafety Committee (as applicable) in place before the grant application is filed.

The language used in grant writing should be simple, concise, logical, and crystal clear. Check the agency website for the latest guidelines for the grant application. Ensure you follow the exact format given in the template in the grant guidelines. Word limits, font styles, font sizes, and margins as specified in the template in the grant guidelines should be complied with. Ensure that a language, spelling, and grammar check is done for the grant proposal. Print and review the application for appeal and for correcting errors, if any.

14.2 Tips for Key Elements of a Successful Grant Proposal Application

The title of the project should be concise, reflective of the proposed work, and create a favorable impression when reviewers read the proposal. The cover letter and project summary should be well written and self-explanatory. It should be easy for the reviewer to understand the felt need, objectives, and novelty of the project. Explain in clear terms why the idea should be funded and how it will add to the existing knowledge in the field. A review of literature should be adequate to show the lacunae in the existing body of work and how this idea will address the gaps in the published literature. If available, please provide preliminary data from pilot studies to support the idea under consideration. Explain how this can be expanded and translated into the larger grant project proposal. Stating the project outcomes and linking the objectives, methods, and project outcomes help reviewers to get a clear idea about the proposal at hand under consideration for funding. Also, outlining alternate methods which would be used to address the research question in case of potential problems gives a favorable impact on the reviewers. Discussing the statistical approach for data analysis and having a statistical expert on board is always useful while writing up a proposal. Ensure the budget is apt to address the objectives and the experiments for the project. Ensure that the timelines are really addressing the research idea at hand under consideration for funding. Ensure that the bibliography and citations are as per the required format of the funding agency guidelines. Try to avoid writing the proposal at the last minute. Ensure adequate time (at least 3–6 months) for planning, writing, reviewing, and revising the grant proposal before submission to the agency. Ensure you provide adequate details in your grant proposal about your investigator team regarding their training, expertise, ability to lead a team, details of ongoing and completed funded grants, and publication details from the last 5 years, which should be relevant to the proposed work. Early Career investigators should provide their biographical sketch and show that they have adequate institutional support and resources to carry out the project successfully. It is also imperative that the young investigators have collaborators for specific expertise and resources needed for the project. Having a mentor for guidance early on in their career for grant writing and project implementation is helpful for young investigators.

Lastly, if you face rejection the first time, use it as a learning experience and a stepping stone for success on the second attempt. Address the critique and reviewer comments with an open mind and invite subject experts to brainstorm how to address the issues raised, which led to rejection. Work on the proposal systematically and try once more the next time round, and success will be yours for sure.

14.3 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has briefed researchers about the main components of the grant proposal checklist. A word of caution is in order here. This checklist can, at best, be used as a preliminary guide to familiarize with the grant writing process, and it is mandatory for the researcher to check out the grant agency guidelines and comply with them for success of grant writing.

Grant writing is a painstaking, time-consuming, systematic process, with no guarantee of success to everyone alike, the first timer or the experienced doyen. Every time you start with a new idea, the same process is to be done meticulously all over again. Work on the idea, pen it down as a grant proposal and toil day and night, till it is ready. Perseverance is the key to success in grant writing. Wishing you all the best for your success!

Case Scenarios

1. A researcher is working on submitting a research proposal for monetary support to the funding agency. Which of the following are absolutely essential for the researcher's success of funding?
 - (a) Novelty of grant idea relevant to emerging health needs of the country.
 - (b) Methodology sufficient to provide answers to the objectives.
 - (c) Pilot data available in support of the idea.
 - (d) Sufficient expertise in the investigator team to ensure success of the study.
 - (e) Approvals from necessary agencies for carrying out the study.
2. Can you list the essential elements of a grant proposal checklist?

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