Writing a Compelling Grant Application

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Learning goals

• Identify elements of a compelling ePCT application
• Tips on NIH matchmaking
Important things to know

- Online resources are available for the development of pragmatic trial grant applications
- NIH has new policies and forms related to clinical trial grant applications
- Some things, such as milestones and safety monitoring, may be negotiable around the time of an award
National Institutes of Health

- NIH is made up of 27 institutes and centers, or ICs
- ICs award >80% of the NIH budget each year
- Each IC has a budget and a director, and typically their own review for large trials
Find the right NIH program official

IC mission and priorities:
• Focus on a specific disease area, organ system, or stage of life
• Use Matchmaker tool in NIH RePORTER for suggestions
• Talk to program officials
• Consult your mentor and colleagues
NIH RePORTER matchmaker tool

- Use draft of specific aims
- Email query to program official rather than call (we telework and attend meetings)
• This can help to connect you with the most appropriate PO(s)
• Prepare agenda and questions, to productively interact!
• Program officer can recommend a study section or two
Find the right FOA

• Request for Application (RFA)
  • For specific areas of science where more research is needed, and applications are encouraged for investigator-initiated research in this specific area of science

• Notice of Special Interest (NOSI) and Program Announcement (PA, PAS, PAR)
  • For an area of scientific interest for one or more ICs where investigator-initiated research is needed
## NIH scientific contacts

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Tailor the application

Tailor your application to address all the FOA-specific instructions and review criteria
Application dos

- Justify the research
- Include pilot data
- Address potential overlaps
- Reduce complexity
- Ensure aims are capable of advancing the field
- Choose appropriately expert personnel for a multidisciplinary team
- Link data collection and analysis to aims
- Justify the use of multiple sites and sample size
Application don’ts

• Skip any steps (eg, literature review)
• Use dense or confusing writing style
• Include untestable aims
• Include non-relevant aims or fishing expeditions
• Assume that prior collaboration is irrelevant
Strategies for success

- Pose a clear research question
- Convince the reviewer your study is worth doing
- Sell your research plan—highlight the strengths
- Identify weaknesses and explain how you will deal with them
- Tailor your application to the funding agency
- Obtain feedback from your collaborators, consultants, and others
NIH online resources

https://researchmethodsresources.nih.gov/

- Research methods resources on designing pragmatic and group randomized trials
- NIH Grants Guide: finding FOAs
- NIH Guidance on Biosketches
- NIH Peer Review
- NIH General Application Guide
- NIH Inclusion Policies for research involving human subjects
- NIA Blog (subscribe for weekly posting)
Important things to do

• Read relevant Funding Opportunity Announcement multiple times
• Identify program staff at your target NIH Institute/Center and review your Specific Aims and any questions about them
• Obtain adequate feedback on the Research Plan from the entire study team
Resource: The Living Textbook

Developing a Compelling Grant Application

- Introduction
- Find the Right Program Official
- Find the Right Funding Opportunity Announcement
- Write a Strong Proposal That Addresses Review Criteria
- Review Criteria
- Award Status
- Additional Resources