

PLANNING AND APPLYING FOR RESEARCH GRANT FUNDING

This checklist should serve as a guide as you plan your research grant strategy. In order for this document to be effective at helping you plan your grant, you need to refer to it multiple times throughout the application process.

Planning the Application

- 1) Write your grant based on the research question that most interests you. Do not write your grant tailored specifically to a funding opportunity. This will limit your use of the grant if you are not funded the first time around. The most successful proposals stem from a sustained research focus in a specific area. The best grants are ones that can grow and evolve. Make sure your grant can be tweaked so you can submit it more than once to different types of funding sources.
- 2) Double-check the eligibility requirements and type of grant mechanism. Do you need to be a US citizen? Is there a limit on how far out of training you need to be? Do you need to have a funding history? Some of these requirements are not obvious without a closer look.
- 3) Pay attention to the monetary limitations of the grant. Is the funding sufficient to fund all of your research or only a portion? Are there restrictions on indirect or direct costs? Consider applying for multiple grants to fund different "legs" of your project.
- 4) Pay attention to the deadline and the start date of your grant, if specified. Will you need funding for preliminary data or set up? Is the timing right for your research protocol?
- 5) What happens if you don't find any funding opportunities that fit? Consider asking a mentor or more experienced investigator to collaborate with you on a larger grant. They can often serve as the PI with nominal effort, leaving you to run the project with considerable salary or research support. This will also help build up your experience and funding history for future grants.

Getting Started

So you've found a funding opportunity. What now?

- 1) NIH and affiliated institutes encourage you to call the program director for the RFA/PA you are applying to if you have any questions. Do not delegate this task to an administrative support person. It is good for you to develop a rapport with the staff at each institute. The same goes for foundation applications. It never hurts to call and ask if the topic of your research falls within the scope of their mission before you begin your application.

- 2) Read the RFA/PA carefully. Then read it again! Follow it to the letter. Once you think you have the structure of the grant visualized, create a timeline of goals. This will help you to begin the writing process as well as remind you of special instructions that might apply to your specific proposal.

- 3) Consider your resources for the grant. Do you have enough staff to support the research or do you need to hire new support? Do you have enough protected time? Departmental or mentor support? Will you need to implement a sub-contract with another institution? Hire a consultant?

- 4) First Steps: Begin collecting the supplemental information that you'll need to include in your proposal. This includes Biosketches (IN NIH FORMAT!), Other Support, Letters of Support (YOU DRAFT THEM!). **Contact Barbara Steele, x4-2725 in research management.** Give her a heads up that you are planning to submit this grant. Let her know the deadline and ask for her help/advice on the budget. She will ultimately be the one to sign off on all of your grants. It is worthwhile to befriend this person!

- 5) Budget: Identify the elements or line items of your budget. Will you need equipment? Staff? Data storage or software? How much salary will this grant cover? Are there restrictions to the budget listed in the RFA/PA? If you are unsure of your budget, get help early! Ask **Barbara Steele, x4-2725** from research management, your grants manager, your mentor, or anyone with experience in clinical trial budgeting! The Office of Clinical Research Resources (OCRR) in Radiology can help you with research budgets, getting through the Research Finance sign off process and more... call **Jamien Richardson at x6-1363.**

Developing the Proposal

- 1) Start early! In general you should get started at least 3 months prior to the deadline. Trying to pull a grant together at the last moment is counter-productive. Many people believe that they can submit and then use the reviewers' comments (pink sheet) to firm up their proposal for the next submission deadline. This is a bad idea. You make an impression on the study section, which is often made up of the same people for different deadlines. Therefore it is important to make the best first impression possible.
- 2) Prioritize: The specific aims should be your first, second and third priority! Grants are often funded or not based on the merit of the specific aims page. Consider it the introduction to your grant. If it doesn't capture the attention of the reviewer and make him want to read more detail about your project, then you have lost. Your specific aims page should include 1 clear hypothesis and 2-3 clear and concise supporting goals.
- 3) Allow yourself plenty of time to distribute your grant to mentors or colleagues for review. The people whose input you want/need are busy too. They should not be expected to work around the clock on your proposal. Give them plenty of time to read carefully and provide comments. You should have a draft finished for review at least one month before deadline.
- 4) Give your grant to someone outside your specific research area to review. Often the reviewers reading your proposal will only have a general knowledge of the topic. You need to make sure your writing and procedures are clear to a lay audience. Having someone who is unfamiliar with your topic read your grant for clarity will provide important feedback.
- 5) Simplicity. Grants are about the quality of the research proposal. If you have a great idea, ask yourself: Is it innovative? Is it supported by previously collected data? Is your protocol clear and manageable within the scope of the grant?

Submitting the Proposal

- 1) The administrative components (Face page, Abstract, Budget, Justification, Bios, OS – if applicable, Sections E, F, G, H, I of the Research Proposal, Checklist and Letters of Support) of the grant need to go to Research Management at LEAST 3 weeks prior to the deadline. Work with **Barbara Steele, x4-2725** to make sure she is expecting your budget and other admin

support pieces. Ask her when you should follow up and then don't bug her until that day arrives. Imagine that she is swamped with 50 grants, all for the same deadline, and you'll come close to understanding her level of stress. Having 50 investigators call her every day irritates her and uses up valuable time that she could be spending reviewing your grant!

- 2) Have at least 2 new people proofread the final document for typos, grammar, etc...
- 3) Cover letters are important. They create a good first impression. Always place a cover letter after the NIH face page with the RFA label attached. It should thank the reviewers for considering your grant proposal and can be used to request a specific study section where appropriate. Cover letters are especially important for grants that are not in response to an RFA or PA (Investigator Initiated).
- 4) Allow one FULL DAY for organizing, printing, collating, and packaging the grant. Don't rush! Check for Fed Ex pick-up schedules and locations in advance! Have a courier service's information lined up in case of any delays, delivery mishaps, etc... Murphy's Law applies here! Double-check the address on the RFA/PA with the institute staff! Including the zip code! But most important of all: SEND IT OUT EARLY! Sending the grant one or two days in advance allows you to deal with any unforeseen problems and still make the deadline!
- 5) Check on your grant delivery with the FedEx or UPS tracking number. Do not just assume that your grant arrived safely!

Contacts:

- **Office of Clinical Research Resources – Jamien Richardson, x6-1363**
- **Director – Clinical Research in Radiology – Dr. Scott Gazelle, x6-4047**
- **Research Finance Pre-Award Rep for Radiology – Barbara Steele, x4-2725**
- **Radiology Finance – Jae Lee, x4-9789**

Post-award Advice

So you've been funded. Congratulations! Now what?

- 1) Notification: NIH will notify the institution's signatory. At MGH this person is Marcia Smith – Director of Research Management. Research Management will then send out notifications to the PI, the division grants manager (if there is one) and your departmental post-award representative, **Dick Elliott, x4-9785**. Foundations or other funding groups usually notify the PI directly of awards. The PI should then notify the departmental post-award representative (Dick Elliott) in Research Management.
- 2) Getting your fund set-up information: If you need to request an advance fund set-up, you will need to contact **Dick Elliott, 4-9785** and obtain the advance fund set-up request form. Fill this out with a back-up fund number and fax it back to Dick. He should send you a confirmation back, along with an activation notice. This notice will have both a PACE Special Billing number and a PeopleSoft number.
- 3) What do these numbers mean and how do you know when to use each one? The PACE Special Billing # (SB#) has now, as of Jan. 29th, replaced the Walker number and will be used for all Partners Patient Revenue Systems. The Walker number is from an old billing system that MGH has phased out. This means any system related to patient billing will use a PACE 7-digit Special Billing number which is 9 plus the 6 digits of your PeopleSoft number. Whenever scheduling a patient examination/lab test, etc... you will need to use your PACE Special Billing number. Non-patient revenue systems such as Purchasing, Accounts Payable for patient stipends, employee reimbursements or salary, etc... should use the PeopleSoft number without the number 9 in front as you have been accustomed to doing in the past.
- 4) Forms – When searching for the correct forms for Accounts Payable, HR, Research Finance, etc... the best place to look is always on their website. You can also try the Partners Pulse Intranet website under the section marked Forms. Included here are links to a number of different websites that you may find helpful.

<http://www.mghRADresearch.org> - Office of Clinical Research Resources (OCRR) - Radiology

<http://crp.partners.org/oncall/ClinicalResearch/home.asp> - Clinical Research Program

<http://mghra.partners.org/GrantChecklist/GrantProposalChecklistLink.doc> - Research Finance Grants Checklist

<http://mghra.partners.org/> - Research Affairs/Management

<http://is.partners.org/hr/forms/index.html#mgh> - Partners MGH forms

<http://is.partners.org/hr/abouthr/index.html> - Human Resources

- 5) Understanding the Terms and Conditions of your award – when you get your award notification, it is very important to read the fine print. Often an award comes with very specific requirements and/or limitations. You can call your research finance post-award representative, your departmental/division grants manager or the OCRR for questions or help understanding the terms and conditions of your award.

Contacts:

- **Research Finance Post-award Rep for Radiology – Dick Elliott, x4-9785**
- **Director, OCRR – Jamien Richardson, x6-1363**

Checklist:

- _ Carefully and completely read through the RFA/PA
- _ Make a timeline of goals and deadlines
- _ Budget – Identify – Sub-contracts? – 3 Months to Deadline
- _ Start collecting supporting materials – 3 Months to Deadline
- _ Start your Specific Aims page
- _ Go over Specific Aims page with your mentor – 2.5 Months to Deadline
- _ Rewrite Specific Aims page
- _ Go over it again with a different mentor
- _ Begin writing research proposal – 2 Months to Deadline
- _ Submit first draft to colleagues for review – 1.5 Months to Deadline
- _ Write your second draft
- _ Notify Research Management of your deadline
- _ Submit to outside reviewers for comments
- _ Submit revised draft to mentor for review – 1 Month to Deadline
- _ Submit admin packet to Research Management – 1 Month to Deadline
- _ Collect signatures for final copies – 2 Weeks to Deadline
- _ Begin to collate grant – 2 Weeks to Deadline
- _ Collect signatures from Research Management – 1 Week to Deadline
- _ Photocopy, Print and Collate – 3 Days to Deadline
- _ Double Check EVERYTHING!
- _ Package and Send! – 2 Days to Deadline

CONGRATULATIONS!