A Winning Recipe for Your Grant Application
Grant Bootcamp – Session 3

Peter Scheidt, MD,
Randi Streisand, PhD,
& Stephan Ladisch, MD

Objectives

• Describe the critical elements of a strong research proposal
• Describe the purpose and key components; your Specific Aims
• Know what it takes to develop a strong competitive research proposal.
• Finish in 20 minutes
You want to develop a good research project

• How to get started?
• Know the literature
• Develop Specific Aims

General Characteristics of a Strong Research Proposal

• High impact
• Innovative/novel
• Niche for unique contribution
• Realistic
• Fundable
Developing the Science

Preparation
- Choose area of strong interest and passion
- Identify under-explored niche
- Develop long-term goal in niche area with a continuum of research to reach your goal
- Comprehensive literature review to become the “world’s expert”
- Discuss and explore ideas with a mentor and knowledgeable colleagues

Strong Mentorship is Essential
- Interested and available
- Committed to your success
- Often a supervisor but not necessarily
- Multiple mentors are useful
- Check-out and evaluate potential mentors before selecting
What are Specific Aims?

The one page section of a research proposal titled **Specific Aims** that encapsulates the study including:

- Summarized background and significance
- Brief description of the scientific approach
- What is to be accomplished – specific aims

The equivalent of – “**You had me at hello**”

Why are Specific Aims Important?

- Your tool to develop the science; the proposed research
- The primary communication about your proposal to reviewers who do not read the full proposal (all but the assigned reviewers)
Components of Draft Specific Aims

• Start with bullets, outline or diagram
• The problem
• What is known – “the Story”
• The gap(s) in knowledge and/or research needed to advance
• The goal or central hypothesis to be tested
• The general research approach
• The specific aims to be accomplished
  • Outcome/target - not process
  • With hypotheses if appropriate
• The payoff – why expected outcomes are important to the field and investigator

Specific Aims – Communication Tool

Who is the audience?

• Your mentors and others providing input
• All of your reviewers
• The only part that many reviewers may see
• Logical and linear – tell a story
• Reader-friendly and organized
• Must be easy and enjoyable to read (“sparkle”)
• At the conclusion the reviewer feels excited and compelled to support
Input and Feedback

- Seek as much review and feedback as you can get
  - Mentor(s)
  - Peers

- Use experts in the topic and experienced non-experts
- The more eyes and feedback, the stronger the proposal is likely to be
- Include advice and input that improves and fits

Recommended Timeline for Success

- Concept & scientific development: 6 mos.–1 year
- Specific Aims: 4–6 months
- Biostatistics consultation: 4-6 months
- Full proposal: 6–12 weeks
- Budget: 2–3 months
- Endorsements & supporting documents: 4-6 weeks
The Full Proposal

- Title early to define what study is really about
- Parallel to the Specific Aims
- Tell the “story”: logical, linear, compelling
- Justify all major decisions
- Assume some reviewers are not experts on the topic
- Well written and reader friendly
  - Limit jargon & excessive acronyms
  - Spaces & appearance important
- Methods sufficient to understand approach but not excessive or too dense.
- Impact and pay-off visionary and impactful

Beyond the Science

- After developing a strong scientific proposal you are not done
- Biostatistics
- Grants and Contracts office and budget
- Letters of support as needed: collaboration(s), institutional, mentor, etc.
- IRB, Responsible conduct of research training
- Assembling and packaging
To Recap

- Become the world’s expert on your topic
- Seek strong mentorship
- Seek lots of input and feedback
- Well developed Specific Aims for developing the proposal and for communication
- A logical, linear, compelling case
- Allow ample time
- Prepare a full proposal package that “sparkles”
- Get help

Connect with GEP…

Visit [www.ctsfcn.org/gep](http://www.ctsfcn.org/gep) to learn more about the Grants Enhancement Program

To Request Services please email: [GrantsEnhancement@childrensnational.org](mailto:GrantsEnhancement@childrensnational.org)