

Overview of Proposal Structure

Peggy Murray, M.S.W., NIAAA
NIH 2008 Summer Research Institute
Rockville, MD



What Does NIH Want?

- Completeness
- Significance
- **Originality**
- Clarity



(A Concept Paper can help with this.)

The starting point . . .

Have a good idea

- Addresses a *significant* question
- Brings something new to the table
- Is project focused?
- Is project feasible?

What is a *significant* question?

- Immediate/future relevance to IC mission
 - Disease
 - Population
- Relevance to science – will it advance...
 - fundamental understanding?
 - scientific knowledge?
 - research methods and tools?

Institute and Program Priority Areas

- Special Reports
- PAs and RFAs – now called FOAs
- Program Descriptions – go online
- *Talk to Program Staff* – one pagers

Find out about FOAs

NIH Guide to Grants and Contracts:

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html>

NIH Website



<http://www.nih.gov>

Proposal Sections

- Specific Aims
- Background and Significance
- Preliminary Studies
- Research Design and Methods
- Data Analysis

Specific Aims

- Hypothesis driven
- Clear focus: what will we learn?
- Be realistic given

Background & Significance

- Literature- and theory-based rationale
- Thorough and accurate citations
- Conceptual framework & justification
- **So what???** - "Real World" relevance

Preliminary Studies

- The project is feasible
- You and your team are capable:
 - Experience, training and prior collaborative experience
- Research tools (instruments, trainings, etc.) are identified and available

Research Design and Methods

- All steps of the study should:
- Be overviewed in a concise design and/or protocol
 - Answer the questions in the specific aims
 - Anticipate potential problems in design and how to address
 - Contribute to the results

Subject Sample

- Composition: representativeness, women, minorities, children, elderly
- Recruitment, retention, attrition, incentives, tracking
- Data & safety monitoring board or plan
- Consent, confidentiality

Data Management and Analysis

- Provide a data management plan
- Tie each step of the analysis to the aims
- Use analytic methods that are appropriate for the data and the questions

Data Analysis

- A methods expert will be a reviewer
- Therefore, you need a methods expert as a consultant
- Your methods expert should help you develop the application

Abstract: Language is Important

Make diagnoses clear and specific

- "intervention development", "prevention"
- "services research", "RCT"
- "exploratory/developmental"
- "efficacy", "effectiveness", "epidemiology"
- "children ages 0-5", "transition to adulthood"
- "risk and protective factors"

Packaging is Important: Write Strategically

- Use the 10-25 pages wisely
- Help reviewers find what they need
- Explanatory graphics (conceptual models, time lines, etc) can helpul
- Do not put important information in appendices
- Use brief, clear headers and sub-headers

General Issues

- Supply evidence for all your assertions
- Write for a non-specialist reader
- This is a big project- plan accordingly
- Use consultants during writing- not just after funding.

Writing Tips

- Clarify the study's significance
- Transform idea(s) into an exciting story
- Convey your enthusiasm for the project
- Seek & accept feedback on multiple drafts
- Present dilemmas & how to address them
- Provide evidence for all your assertions

DO Show That....

- Your methods work
- Data trends support the hypothesis
- Data analysis is sound
- Study design will answer the question
- You have the abilities, support, community connections, etc. to accomplish the project

DO NOT ...

- Omit a conceptual model or theory base
- Do what's already been done
- Use out-of-date methods
- Use methods that don't test the hypothesis
- Omit discussion of negative results
- Use inappropriate statistical analyses

Review Criteria

- Significance
- Approach
- Innovation
- Investigator
- Environment
- Budget
- Human subjects protection
- Inclusion of women, minorities, children

Peggy Murray, M.S.W.
301-443-2594
pmurray@mail.nih.gov