

Facilitator Notes

# The Grant Application Process: An Overview

These notes accompany the PowerPoint presentation of the same title by Barbara Gastel.

This module normally would accompany other modules on preparing a grant proposal.

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| Module Title | The Grant Application Process: An Overview |
| Course title (or analogous information) | This module can serve as part of a workshop on preparing grant proposals. It also can serve as part of a workshop unit, course unit, or short course on the topic. It is one of nine modules on preparing grant proposals. Typically, most or all of the nine should be used, in the order (or approximately the order) in which they are numbered. |
| Unit Title | Preparing Grant Proposals |
| No. of Unit | Not applicable |
| Session Day/Time | Not applicable |
| Length of Session | This module typically would run about 30 to 60 minutes. The length would depend mainly on how much the facilitator elaborates on points in the slides, how much discussion there is, and how much time is devoted to the small-group activity. The facilitator should keep in mind that this module is intended as an introductory overview and that major points will be developed further in later modules. |
| Aim | This module is intended mainly to introduce participants to the unit by (1) providing an overview of the grant proposal process and (2) introducing key points that will be developed further in later modules. |
| Learning Outcomes | By the end of this module, participants will be able to (1) describe the two main approaches to seeking a funding source well matched with one’s work, (2) briefly summarize the process of obtaining a grant, (3) state several key pieces of advice to follow when preparing a grant proposal. |
| Facilitator Profile | Ideally, this module would be facilitated by someone who has experience with writing, editing, or reviewing grant proposals, because such an individual can enrich the content with examples from his or her experience. However, a less experienced facilitator also can present the module, as the combination of PowerPoint slides and facilitator notes provides sufficient information to do so. Also, the module can be presented jointly by a facilitator and a co-facilitator who provides additional commentary. |
| Participant Profile | This module is primarily for early-career researchers with little or no experience preparing grant proposals. However, it also may aid mid-career researchers who wish to improve their preparation of grant proposals or their mentoring of others in this regard. In addition, it may be helpful to some editors and writing instructors. Participants having experience with grant proposals may be able to enrich the workshop by sharing their experience. |
| Pre-workshop Activities | No pre-workshop activities are required. However, participants are encouraged to identify beforehand a research project or other project for which they would like to seek grant funding. |
| Room Layout | Ideally, this module will be presented in a room layout facilitating interaction—for example, with several small tables, with tables in a U configuration, or with a conference table. However, this module also can be presented in a traditional classroom or a lecture hall. |
| Number of Participants | For optimum discussion, the number of participants should be limited to about 10–15. However, the module also can reasonably delivered to about 25 participants. |
| Files and Materials | PowerPoint file: 01\_Grant Application Process Overview |
| Visual Aids and Resources | Computer with PowerPoint; projector for PowerPoint presentation |
| Potential Embellishments of the PowerPoint | To keep the file small, the presentation consists almost solely of text. Images can be added to make it more visually appealing. For example, decorative images can be inserted between sections to signal a change of subtopic and provide visual relief. Also, relevant images can be added to selected slides if desired.  If desired, the facilitator can divide the material on a given slide into more than one slide or can format some slides for progressive disclosure, in which items on a slide are revealed one by one. |
| Learning methods and activities | The following notes may help facilitators to (1) elaborate on the content of some slides and (2) elicit group participation at suitable times. (Slide 1 is a title slide.)   * Slide 2 (“Preview”)   + Note the topics that the module will address.   + Note the module’s overall aim, which is stated earlier in this facilitator’s guide. (Feel free, of course, to frame it in the way that the group is likely to find most relevant.) * Slide 3 (“Seeking a Possible Match: Two Approaches”)   + Summarize the two approaches.   + Perhaps note that sometimes a combination of the two approaches is most effective.   + Perhaps note that a later module will discuss finding funding sources.   + To elicit participation, perhaps do one of the following: (1) ask participants which approach they would prefer and why; (2) ask whether any participants have experience with either of the approaches and, if so, to give some examples. * Slide 4 (“Preparing to Write the Proposal”)   + Explain what a program officer is (a funding-agency employee who administers grant programs and thus whose job generally includes advising applicants). Note that program officers can be very helpful, for example in helping to determine whether a project is likely to be suitable for a given grant program and in advising researchers in preparing proposals.   + Note that a later module will deal solely with preparing to write a proposal.   + If you will use the module on the literature review as a foundation for a proposal, note it too. * Slide 5 (“Writing and Submitting the Proposal”)   + In discussing the first bulleted item, note that sometimes submitting a grant proposal is a two-stage process, consisting of first submitting a brief preliminary proposal and then submitting a full proposal. In some instances, only those with the best preliminary proposals are invited to submit full proposals. In other instances (for example, where the funding agency just wanted to be able to plan), all who submitted preliminary proposals can submit full proposals.   + Also regarding the first bulleted item: If appropriate, perhaps share or ask about experience with two-stage proposal submission processes.   + Perhaps note that now proposals typically are submitted electronically. * Slide 6 (“Awaiting the Decision”)   + Note that the technical level of the proposal should be geared to the backgrounds of the reviewers. If the backgrounds are not obvious from available materials, a prospective grant applicant may consult a program officer in this regard; he or she should be able to say what type(s) of people will be reviewing the proposals (for example, experts in the same research specialty, researchers in the same general field, or community leaders). Note that if non-specialists will be among the reviewers, the proposal should be written accordingly.   + Perhaps introduce the point that reviewers tend to be very busy and thus that it is important to write proposals readably (as will be discussed in a later module). * Slide 7 (“Following Up”)   + Emphasize that the recipients of research grants typically are expected to write about the work, both in progress reports to the funder and in publications such as journal articles. Researchers who receive grants but do not produce publications based on the work are likely to have difficulty obtaining future grants.   + Note that when proposals seem promising but are not considered strong enough to fund, some funding agencies allow applicants to revise their proposals and resubmit them for potential funding. The applicant can then decide whether to do so. When revising and resubmitting proposals, applicants should pay careful attention to the advice provided by the peer reviewers.   + If appropriate, perhaps share or ask about experience revising and resubmitting proposals not initially accepted. * Slide 8 (“Writing a Proposal: General Advice”)   + (This slide is just a transition slide.) * Slide 9 (“Key Advice on Preparing Proposals”)   + Briefly state these points. Note that these points are discussed further elsewhere in the workshop or unit. * Slide 10 (“Small-Group Session: Your Proposed Project”)   + (This slide is just a transition slide.) * Slide 11 (“Your Proposed Project”)   + This slide contains instructions for the small-group exercise. Ideally, this exercise should be done in groups of about three participants.   + In introducing this exercise, perhaps note that a common problem in proposals is failure to make explicit why the proposed work would be value. Although the value might be obvious to the author, it might not be obvious to those evaluating the proposal.   + If the group is relatively small (perhaps about a dozen participants or less), have all participants report to the full group at the end. If possible, include time for questions.   + If the group is relatively large, perhaps do one of the following: (1) have only some participants (for example, one from each small group) report to the full group on what they propose and why, (2) pair up small groups, and have the members of each small group report to the members of one other small group, or (3) divide the group in half or thirds, and have each participant report to the rest of that group. * Slide 12 (“Example”)   + This slide shows a nontechnical example of what a participant might say when reporting at the end of the exercise presented in the previous slide.   + Facilitators should feel free to substitute or add examples of their own.   + The example(s) should be shown when giving the instructions for the exercise. * Slide 13 (“In Conclusion”)   + Perhaps ask for questions and request any other points that participants would like to make.   + Wrap up the session, for example by expressing the hope that this module has provided good orientation to grant-proposal preparation, restating one or more key messages, and noting the subject of the next module. * Slide 14 (“Wishing you much success!”) and Slide 15 (Creative Commons information etc):   + (These are the standard closing slides for this series of presentations.) |