Writing Strong Grant Proposals for SSHRC

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Start Writing Early

• Begin the process at least 5 months ahead of time
• Contact ORS
• Finish the “junk” in one month (i.e., the SSHRC Web CV or Canadian Common CV)
• Create an overall plan for completing the research that demonstrates the following:
  • The applicant/team has the skills to accomplish the work
  • The appropriate resources are in place
  • The research can be completed within the proposed timeline
  • A linear logic where early components of the project reinforce later components
• Get it down (even if it’s rough or incomplete), then get it right
Academic Writing Versus Grant Writing

• Write for your audience
  • Check the committee make-up from the previous year
Academic Writing Versus Grant Writing

• Ensure the *value* of your proposed research is communicated
  • Value is not merely new knowledge
    • Writers mistakenly think that *understanding* creates value
    • E.g., a 35-volume diary of a Victorian woman who travelled the world is not necessarily valuable
  • If there is a conflict or instability of previous knowledge, then there’s value. Often the surest way to construct an instability is to destabilize something the readers believe to be stable
    • Stasis is not the same thing as background
  • Show that not resolving the instability has costs
Academic Writing Versus Grant Writing

• Other elements of good persuasive writing
  • Each paragraph should have a topic/leading sentence
  • Focus each sentence. Be aware of the position of the subject
    • Passive voice (subject and acting agent are different)
      • “The samples will be analysed [by whom?]…”
    • Active voice (subject and acting agent are the same)
      • “I will analyze the samples…”
      • “The dog chased the cat” vs. “The cat was chased by the dog”
  • Avoid conditional language
Strengthen Each Section

• Adhere to the agency’s guidelines
  • ORS provides pre-formatted templates for many applications
Strengthen Each Section

• **Summary** (1 pg)
  - Should use clear, plain language (minimal academic terminology and reference to methodology)
  - Clearly indicate the following:
    - the challenges or issues to be addressed;
    - the potential contribution of the research in terms of the advancement of knowledge; and
    - the wider potential benefit of the research (e.g., Will this research be of interest to other areas of research/disciplines? Will it be of interest outside the academic community? How will it be used and by whom?)
Strengthen Each Section

• **Description of Project** (5 pgs for IDG, 6 for IG)
  • Use the SSHRC headings and subheadings:
    • Objectives
      • Outline the goals for the research
    • Context
      • Present relevant scholarly literature and your theoretical approach or framework, if applicable; explain the importance, originality, and anticipated contribution to knowledge
    • Methodology
      • Describe the proposed research strategies and key activities; justify the choice of methodology; include a timeline
Strengthen Each Section

• **Knowledge Mobilization** (2000 characters or 1 pg)
  • The specific activities and tools that facilitate the multidirectional flow and exchange of research knowledge
    • E.g., publications, events (workshops, conferences), improved and effective teaching and the development of pedagogy/curricula, and other forms (knowledge transfer, translation, exchange, synthesis)
  • This section should include:
    • A plan to increase the accessibility, flow, and exchange of knowledge among various audiences and participants
    • A plan for engaging appropriate audiences and participants
    • A schedule for achieving the knowledge mobilization activities
    • Elaboration on the purpose of the knowledge mobilization activities
Strengthen Each Section

- **Research Team and Student Training** (2 pgs for IDG, 4 for IG)
  - Describe the research team and include the relative roles, responsibilities, and contributions of each member; the relative proportion of each member’s contribution to the research; and the proportion of time to be spent on this project in relation to any other ongoing research projects.
  - Describe the specific roles and responsibilities of students and research assistants.
    - SSHRC is very supportive of the use of graduate students where appropriate, but both the students and the research must benefit.
  - IG applications must also summarize previous and ongoing research results and note, where appropriate, the relevance of each to the proposed research.
Strengthen Each Section

• **Funds Requested and Budget Justification** (2 pgs)
  • Grant funds must contribute to the direct costs of the research being proposed
  • See the [Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide](#)
  • Use the expense categories provided:
    • Personnel Costs
    • Travel and Subsistence Costs (use [UNB's Travel Policy](#))
    • Other Expenses
      • Professional/Technical services
      • Supplies
      • Non-disposable equipment
      • Other expenses
Strengthen Each Section

• **Expected Outcomes (1 pg)**
  • Should elaborate on the potential benefits and/or outcomes of the proposed research and related activities. Indicate and rank up to 3 scholarly benefits and 3 social benefits, and up to 5 potential target audiences.
Organize an Internal Review Panel

• Get people to read the application
  • If multiple people can reach a consensus on the key points and milestones, it is a strong proposal
• An internal review panel should consist of 3 colleagues (2 from the same field and 1 from outside the field) who give an in-person review
  • The review is invaluable for:
    • Improving the presentation and the content
    • Increasing collegiality
    • Giving applicants experience in reviewing proposals
    • Compelling an applicant to finish the proposal well ahead of time
    • Creating institutional team spirit
Contact **ORS**

We are happy to answer any questions you have, and we can provide you with the following:

- PDF copies of successful applications from previous years
- First-Steps Checklists to guide you through the application process
- Other relevant links pertaining to the programs (e.g. MS Word templates, budget formulation information, etc.)