Writing for Scholarship: Insights from a Scholarship Liaison Officer

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It's anything but a lottery…

Writing for research funding can be daunting and time-consuming but with the right approach you greatly increase your chance of winning awards.

- Confidence
  - You made it to grad school; you can do this and win
- Time
  - Look at the timeline to final application submission; pace out your component completion times accordingly
- Support
  - Seek out the most appropriate people who will each play a part in the completion of your application: referees, mentors, and colleagues

Getting started

Before you apply for external agency funding, study the funding program announcement/website and ask yourself these questions:

- Do I have enough time to do this?

- Does my research fit the mandate of the funding source? E.g. for the Tri-Agency awards refer to this document:
  - [Selecting the Appropriate Federal Funding Granting Agency](#)

- Have I acquired enough evidence of excellence/strength over my university career so far to satisfy the criteria that will be used for scoring my application?

- Do I have at least two professors who would act as **strong** academic referees for me?

You are going to go for it…

- **C**larity

- **L**inkage

- **I**mpact

- **P**resentation

Clarity! Clarity! Clarity!

- It is so important that what you write is understood across a really diverse audience
  - Always assume you are writing for a multi-disciplinary audience

- Agencies must report to government on outcomes of research they have funded
  - Lay out a clear roadmap from project to outcomes, from discovery to application

- Write in accessible language
  - Do not use jargon/acronyms at all; reviewer will have to work harder to access the info they want from your application

Linkage! Linkage! Linkage!

- You are providing the heart of the file i.e. the information from which referees and nominators will draw from and to which they will link back in their appraisals.
  - Think about the application holistically across all the parts.
  - The more that content provided in other application components links to and from content in your core pieces, the more comprehensive and compelling a picture of you reviewers will see.
- Demonstrate the link between your research results and real world issues
  - how the research would be put into use.
- Undertaking part of your research at partner institutions
  - Are you linking to national, international partners, networks

Impact! Impact! Impact!

- Research is more significant if it is going to have more of an impact
- You must demonstrate that impact with a knowledge mobilization or translation strategy; who are the potential end users?
- At the grad level if you can demonstrate that you have the vision and understanding of what, how, why, when, and where your work can contribute to outside academic outputs, you are ahead of the game!

Presentation!

- Follow format rules
- Left indent text
  - avoid too much bolding, underlining and italicizing, and never use all three at once
- Set up writing properly – opening paragraph, body, closing paragraph
  - One idea per paragraph; one thought per sentence; avoid run-on sentences, jargon, and acronyms
- Make direct statements
- Write so that sections flow from one to the next

More about Research Impact

Responsive Research Practice

- Shift from doing research 'on' people to doing research 'for, by, and with' people
  - Actively listening to our partners in research
  - Meaningful community engagement
- Tri-Agencies adopted this change based on the 4 R's of engaged research - Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991):
  - ✓ Respect of cultural integrity
  - ✓ Relevance to a vulnerable population's perspective and experience
  - ✓ Reciprocal relationships
  - ✓ Responsibility through participation

Knowledge to Action

- Knowledge translation (KT), integrated knowledge translation (iKT), knowledge mobilization (KMb)

- Remember!
    - ✓ the bedrock of each agency's mandate; their responsibility is to report back to the federal government 'knowledge to action' outcomes that are directly related to funding they awarded to researchers
    - ✓ If you demonstrate this in your research proposal, you have made your reviewer's job so much easier
    - ✓ Provide them with a roadmap to tangible, meaningful, compelling outcomes beyond academia

What is a KT, iKT, KMb Plan?

- Activities relating to the production and use of research results, including knowledge synthesis, dissemination, transfer, exchange, and co-creation or co-production by researchers and knowledge users.

- Impacts are ultimately reflected through such indicators as global economic performance, competitiveness, public service effectiveness, new products and services, employment, policy relevance, learning skills enhancement, quality of life, community cohesion, and movement toward reconciliation and social inclusion.

2 Key Components

Lay Summary or Abstract

- Typically read in under 5 minutes; usually the first thing reviewers read

- Must have a compelling opening sentence

- Reviewers want to grasp quickly in the summary
  - Why it's innovative?
  - What's the context?
  - What are you going to bring to the table that's new and different?

- Structure
  - Explain the problem and relay the urgency of its resolution
  - Situate it in the current state of research knowledge
  - Identify any other related and compelling factors
  - Explain the methods you will use to undertake the research, briefly explain the research environment
  - Why are you the one to do it; building on your previous project?
  - Impact on society; who will benefit and why

Research Proposal

- Goal > to convince others of the value of the research you are undertaking

- Demonstrate
  - Your expertise
  - Your competency
  - You are the one with the plan

- Structure
  - **Introduction/research question**
    - **Capture the reviewer's interest!**
    - Provide the overarching context of what your research is about
    - Zero in on your project's importance within that context
    - Your research question must be specific, targeted
  - **Purpose**
    - What do you seek to contribute in the broader sense?
    - Will there be contributions at various levels – Individual, organizational, community, national, international, environmental, social, cultural, economic, political, scholarly?
    - Why should anyone care? Make the case for the need for this project
    - How are you qualified to conduct this research?

- ➤ **Objectives**
  - Specific and concrete; what are you going to do
  - Leads directly to outcomes that support your overall purpose
  - Be consistent throughout
  - Work needs to be doable/realistic in terms of timeframe, resources, abilities, etc.
- ➤ **Theoretical Framework**
  - Be explicit about the theoretical approaches you are using
  - Explain why they are appropriate
  - Tie your results back to the framework i.e. how your research will fill a gap in the knowledge
- ➤ **Literature review**
  - Identify what's been done in this field and ensure that you know the seminal works, authors, findings
  - Select the most important papers that support your work. Select the most important papers that come to contrary conclusions. Thoroughly understand any controversy
  - Be certain of any gap you try to establish, and make clear why the gap should be addressed
  - Be consistent; stay focussed and concise
  - Situate your project within your overall record; what's your background (Is this a logical progression from previous work and research?)

- **Methodology**
  - Use this section to explain how you intend to conduct your research; specify what research methods or approaches you will utilize e.g. archival research, case study, content analysis, observational study, meta-analysis, etc.)
  - Is it feasible and practical (time, funding, data analysis, etc.) and will it result in realistic and important project outputs
  - If you have data at this early stage, build them into your proposal
  - If not, explain what you are going to do with the data once you have it
  - Provide a timeline to project completion
- **KT, iKT, KMb plan i.e. Knowledge to Action!**
  - Specify what your intended outcomes are
  - Show that your thinking goes beyond the one project you're describing, with the goal of creating a more holistic and innovative proposal ; this is the hallmark of really robust and responsive research and will impress reviewers; Does it have understandable impacts to end users i.e. industry users, practitioners, policy makers
  - Identify the stakeholders who might be interested in your results through collaborations, commercialization and development activities
  - Demonstrate that your research has reach, relevance and relationships! All this adds to the integrity of what you are proposing i.e. it solidifies the plan
  - Make sure the activities flow logically from the progression of the project, identify how you're going to get the results to those people/groups, and others – presentations? reports?, journal articles?, media?
  - A carefully laid out, well-articulated 'knowledge to action' strategy is the most compelling way to conclude your scholarship proposal