Tips for writing a CIHR grant proposal

Engage your audience – write with the reviewer in mind

* Try to tell a compelling story
* Employ a language that is a generalist and expert
  + Do not omit important things
* Reviewer should be able to see what you are getting at.
* Terminology (precise, concise)
* Pay attention to the structure
* Bold selectively, header, white space
* Adhere to format guidelines
* Minimize jargon, acronyms and abbreviations
* Names in references cited
* Proofread – eliminate spelling and grammatical error

Have your application pre-reviewed

* have trusted colleague review
* well in advance, so have time to incorporate feedback
* internal review process (Fred Hutchinson?)
* Ellen? Elizabeth?

Summaries are more important than what you may think

* Lay abstract
  + (when community reviewer participates, increase transparency)
  + Don’t use jargon and abbreviation if it is not easily understood
  + Allow the general public to see what’s going on
* Summary of research proposals
  + may also be used for the relevance review
    - Explanation of how the summary is relevant
  + Tips: adequately reflect summary & methodology
  + Concise and include project aim, overview of the research plan
  + Key points, guide readers in what you want to convey
  + Address Evaluation criteria:
    - Research approach, originality, applicant, environment, impact
      * Impact: knowledge translation:
* Short summaries within the proposal
* Deadline: 8pm eastern of the day.

Research net account: CIHR Pin

Canadian Common CV account

Planning and preparation

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/27491.html>

The objectives of this summary page are to:

* *Generate interest.*Get the reviewer interested in the research question.
* *Demonstrate importance.*Convince the reviewer of the importance of your work.
* *Give concise Specific Aims and an overview of each part of the Research Plan.*Present a lucid, precise overview of the Research Plan that is well founded both on your experience and on that of the literature. In basic biomedical and clinical science, indicate that you know what the expected results are (and that you have a 'Plan B' if needed—but Plan B shouldn't be given much space, only recognition). In social science and humanities research, you will want to point out how and why your project will complement previous research, rather than simply building on the existing literature.
* *Develop a timeframe.*Outline your timelines at the end of the section of the Research Plan that discusses each Specific Aim. Only a few words are needed.

**The layout of this Summary Page.**

***Setting the stage***(about 1/3 of the Summary Page).

Give a few introductory sentences that set the general (biological/health/social) stage, and then the research stage. The level here should be comparable to a "News and Views" in Nature.

For example:

* *"The development of the brain is one of the most complex biological processes known. Each neuron in the brain contacts about 1,000 other neurons, but the molecular mechanisms by which axon guidance and synapse formation are regulated are poorly understood. Nevertheless, a number of inherited disorders have been shown to be associated with defective axon guidance."*

Next, present the General Objective and Specific Aims of your research proposal. In general, you will want to have only three to four Specific Aims. A hypothesis may not be required if it is implicit, or if the research is not hypothesis-driven.

* *"The General Objective of our research is to identify critical regulators of..."*
* *"To attain this objective, we have three Specific Aims:..." State them now.*

***Proposed research***  
(about 2/3 of the Summary Page).

A commonly ignored yet essential component of this Summary Page is to state **why** you are undertaking the proposed research, or a particular experiment. You can force yourself to give the rationales by using the wording illustrated in the examples below:

* *"To identify molecular regulators of axonal guidance, we will..."* or
* *"To establish what family members think about genetic testing, we will..."*

Then, state **why** you are using a specific strategy:

* *"Our approach will be to identify homologues of CUB domain proteins expressed in the developing brain, since proteins of this class have been shown to..."* or
* *"The research is designed to produce replicable empirical data about the social ramifications of genetic testing."*

***Significance of the work***(a short paragraph).

It is imperative to make your case well.

For example:

* *"This work will enhance your understanding of the biology of... and to provide a foundation for elucidating [disease category]."* Make a disease link, if possible.

As indicated above, our favourite papers invariably include virtually any of those by Tom Jessell in Cell or Neuron

#### Abstract

To write a great abstract, it is very useful to read a few great ones from a current issue of the journal to which you are submitting the manuscript. That is all the guidance you need. Writing a good abstract takes at least one day. In this PubMed® era, your abstract may be the only thing that most people will read, so devote at least a day to it, look at it again a few days later, and have it vetted by a colleague who is not intimately familiar with the work in that manuscript.

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/42093.html>

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45095.html>