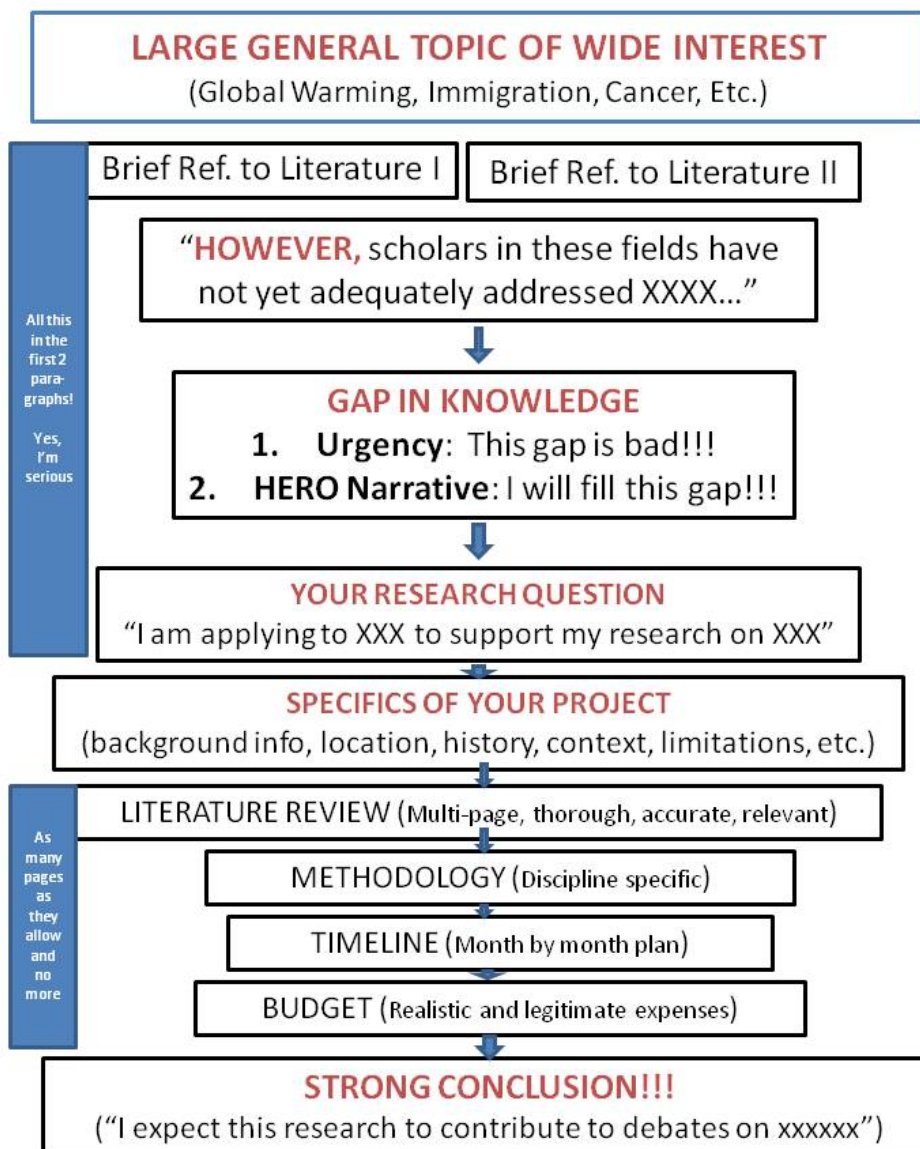


Dr. Karen's Foolproof Grant Template

This Research Proposal Template has won hundreds upon hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant money for multiple graduate students and scholars in the social sciences and humanities over the past 15 years. <http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/>

You may share, but credit Dr. Karen Kelsky of The Professor Is In, <http://theprofessorisin.com>). Dr. Karen Kelsky is a former professor and Department Head at University of Oregon and University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

"The Foolproof Research Proposal Template"



Let's walk through this step by step.

The first step is to identify what **large general topic of wide interest** that your specific project relates to. These are topics that anyone, including your grandmother or someone sitting next to you on a plane, would say, "oh, yes, that's an important topic." Obvious Examples include: immigration, sustainable energy, changes in the family, curing cancer, new social technologies, environmental degradation, global warming, etc. Until you can identify a really broadly interesting theme that your project relates to, you will never be successful in applying for grants.

If you work on arcane topics or in a small field (ie, medieval French literature), don't despair. You don't have to relate to current events or go all presentist. You just need to find the way in to your topic that starts at its widest possible relevance or interest, as appropriate for your field. Don't start at your topical micro-niche, even when you know you're writing for others in or near that niche. You always must show a wider import/context to your topic.

This is because your application must **excite** the readers, and the readers are likely from a range of different disciplines. They will not all be interested in your discipline's narrow debates. They want to know that your work and your intellectual and scholarly vision are wide, and broad, and encompassing.

Once you have established your wide, much debated, topic, you then identify **two bodies of literature** relevant to your own training that dealt with this topic.

If you are an anthropologist, and your research is on Haitian communities in New York City, for example, you will start by pointing to the wide debates on immigration in America. Then you will write, "scholars in many fields have addressed these important questions. Within cultural anthropology, scholars such as xxx, xxx, and xxx have all explored the role of cultural beliefs in shaping immigrant communities. Within Caribbean Studies, meanwhile, scholars such as xxx, xxx, and xxx have focused on the specific demographic and economic trends which have fueled outward migration."

This brief survey will be no more than 3 sentences long. And indeed all of the above must be done in two paragraphs and no more. Complain, claim that it is "impossible," and then get it down to two paragraphs. Because it is only the Introduction to the "Kicker" Sentence, the axis on which your entire appeal for funding rests. And the Kicker Sentence must be on the first page.

The Kicker is your "HOWEVER" sentence. The "however" sentence is the crux and the anchor of your entire proposal.

It reads like this:

“However, none of these works have addressed the central question of XXXXXXXX.”

XXXXXXX in this case is YOUR view of what is most essential to an accurate understanding of the big topic, but which has never to date been studied by anyone else.

This brings you to the **GAP IN KNOWLEDGE**: “Despite much excellent work on themes such as XXX and XXX, scholars examining the transformations in immigration in America have not yet fully explored the importance of XXXX in creating and sustaining these communities.”

Now for the **URGENCY**:

“Yet, without such an understanding, we are left with an inadequate analysis that creates the condition for ill-informed policy decisions and a self-sustaining cycle of misunderstanding and resentment...”

Now for the **HERO NARRATIVE**.

“This study will remedy this gap in the literature by examining the class and racial politics of an immigrant Haitian community in New York City in order to more fully elucidate the heretofore unrecognized relationships between XXX and XXXX in one highly contested immigrant context. “

Remember, **YOU are the HERO** who is going to save us from ourselves and our inadvertant but devastating ignorance about the true significance of XXX!

This is immediately followed by a **CONCRETE AND UNMISTAKABLE STATEMENT OF YOUR RESEARCH PROJECT** (One of the most common grant proposal mistakes is to never include a single and foregrounded, easily identified sentence encapsulating your research project) :

” I am applying to the XXX Foundation to support the completion of my dissertation on XXX. Through a close and fine-grained analysis of XXX, I will show that in contrast to previous assumptions, in fact immigrant communities are XXXXXX.”

The rest of the essay then provides **substantiating evidence**. In other words, concrete evidence that the project is doable, by you, according to reasonable and well thought out disciplinary methods and timeline.

SPECIFICS: This is one to two paragraphs of more specific information about the background, context, history, and limitations of the research. This demonstrates that you've looked into the project thoroughly and are familiar with it from several angles.

LITERATURE REVIEW: This builds on the very brief references in the first paragraph, and demonstrates that you have, in fact, read the major literature related to this topic. All citations must be complete and correct. Zero tolerance for misspellings or typos. All sources **MUST**, without exception, be listed on the attached bibliography.

METHODOLOGY: These are the specific methods that you will use to conduct the research. These differ by discipline.

TIMELINE: This is a month-by-month (or week-by-week) plan of research. What will you do when? Be specific! Name dates!

BUDGET: This is a general list of costs and any already committed funding sources. Break down your legitimate research expenses, including lab supplies, field supplies, travel both large and small, books and materials, internet or computer access fees, etc.

All of this substantiating evidence is meant to prove, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that you will **CORRECTLY UTILIZE** the grant money once you receive it.

Finally, you cannot finish without a **STRONG CONCLUSION**. Even one sentence suffices, but do **NOT** neglect to include it. It may read like this: "I expect this research to contribute to debates on XXXXX and play an important role in shaping debates on XXXX and XXXX in the coming years."

This Conclusion demonstrates that you are a master of both the micro and the macro implications of your project. You have an unassailable timeline and budget, but you also have your eye on the wider scholarly world and your role in it.

Do all of this, my friends, and you will walk away with generous, abundant funding for your every project. You will have the leisure to do the best work, and the best work will in turn legitimize you for the next major grant for which you apply. You will be on the **"GRANT GRAVY TRAIN"**, and that is the key to the most successful academic careers.