

## The American Medical Writer's Association (AMWA) Essential Skills Certificate Program

### Purpose and Impact

The American Medical Writer's Association (AMWA) is a professional group that unites writers in the clinical and scientific fields. As the largest group of medical communicators, AMWA hosts national and regional conferences that provide professional development opportunities for all experience levels. AMWA has many educational opportunities on topics related to medical writing. As a member, I have access to their large catalog of free or discounted courses and workshops. The association also offers webinars on professional development, including how to get started in the field and developing key skills. While graduate school has greatly improved my communication skills, I have no experience in the medical field. This has led me to find other ways of establishing myself in the medical writing community.

AMWA offers an Essential Skills (ES) certificate that indicates proficiency in areas they consider necessary for effective medical communicators. This allows writers and editors of all levels to enhance their skills and knowledge in fundamental areas like grammar, medical terminology, and statistics. The certificate is earned by completing eight credits, which are awarded by attending conference workshops or reviewing self-study workbooks. The workbooks contain quizzes that must be passed in order to earn each credit. While reviewing them, I would have access to practice quizzes, exercises, and resource guides. The certificate program can be purchased as a full package, which includes enrollment and seven workbooks to earn the eight ES credits. The package offers over 25% in savings over purchasing individual books, and additional discounts discussed in the budget section sets the package at its lowest price to date.

AMWA educational materials have given me a valuable glimpse into the medical writing field, but my career prospects would benefit from earning a certificate from the largest medical communicator association. Earning this certificate would enhance my skills as a writer and fill in my current knowledge gaps. It would also exhibit my commitment to developing skills in the field, a significant advantage in my early career. As I begin a job search in the upcoming months, I hope to display the skills I have acquired at Purdue and from professional development opportunities like those found in AMWA.

### Budget Justification

Funding from this grant would go towards purchasing the AMWA's Essential Skills (ES) certificate package. The purchase includes a two-year enrollment in the ES program and seven self-study workbooks on topics required for certification. Along with basic grammar and sentence structure, the subjects in these workbooks include medical terminology, ethics in communication, statistics, and figures. While these topics are often covered during conference events, this package allows me to review the materials at my own pace and measure my progress with exercises and quizzes.

In addition to the career development opportunities, it is a good time to enroll in the ES program as the package is heavily discounted. For non-members, the cost of enrollment and printed self-study workbooks is normally \$1275. However, there are several offers that bring the final price down by 47.45%. As a student member of AMWA, educational courses and events are available for free or are heavily discounted. The ES package offers a \$300 price reduction. The package is available in both physical and digital forms, with the digital version being the cheaper option. The ES program is also offered at a reduced price for a limited time to welcome the new year. The package includes both enrollment in the certificate program and a set of self-study workbooks that earn education credits upon completion.

The table below shows the original price of the package and the discounts in italics.

| <b>Funds</b>                    | <b>Price</b> |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Original Price                  | \$1275       |
| <i>Member Discount</i>          | -\$300       |
| <i>Digital Package Discount</i> | -\$125       |
| <i>2021 Discount</i>            | -\$180       |
| <b>Total</b>                    | <b>\$670</b> |

While there were several ways to reduce the total cost of the ES package, I did not find other grants that would cover this kind of purchase. The grants and scholarships that my department offers are tied to thesis work. Since this package is not research-focused, funding opportunities are very limited. However, I am grateful that this package is available at such a discounted price and that PGSG funding is available.