Research Abstracts, Proposals, and Grant Writing: Basics from Start to Finish

Lois S. Marshall, PhD, RN
Nursing Education Consultant
Miami, Florida

Learning Objectives

- The learner should be able to describe the basic steps/process of writing a research abstract/proposal/grant.
- The learner should be able to discuss strategies for developing a research abstract/proposal/grant.

At the Beginning: The Idea

- Choose a topic you are passionate about
- Choose a topic that addresses a need in practice, education, research, administration
- Be creative and innovative
- Choose an area where there are funding opportunities available
  - Small grants
  - Large grants

The Idea (Con't)

- Have clear goals and objectives for the research/project
- Why will this research/project make a significant improvement over current "practice"
- What will you need to develop/what data will you need to collect/what materials will you need to acquire to meet your goals and objectives

Gathering Background Information

- Examine previously written research abstracts, research proposals, grant proposals for guidance as well as background information

Call for Abstracts, Proposals

- What are the guidelines/requirements for the call for research abstracts/grant proposals
  - General requirements
  - Specific requirements
- What are the evaluation criteria

The Proposal

- Document in which you systematically propose how you are going to carry out an idea
- Present a strong case for why your abstract should be accepted and/or proposal funded
  - "Selling your idea to the reviewer/reader
  - Competitive edge

The Proposal (Con't)

- Ask yourself the following questions
  - What is your research/project about
  - Why is it important
  - What are you planning to do
  - What is the process you will take to accomplish your project goals/objectives
  - What will your research/project cost, if appropriate
  - Why are you best to conduct/complete this research/project

The Proposal: Common Components

- Title
- Abstract
- Introduction
- Goals/Objectives
- Background/Significance
- Theoretical Foundation/Review of Literature
- Methodology/Research Plan
- Dissemination Plan
- Plan of Management
- Team Credentials
- Institutional Qualifications
- Budget/Budget Justification
- References
- Appendices

Title

- Primary theme of your project
- Not too brief
  - "NCLEX-RN Education"
- Not too long
  - "A Program to Improve Success Rates on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses Involving Group Review Classes, Individual Tutoring, and Staggered Assessment Testing"
- Appropriate length
  - "Student-Centered NCLEX-RN Preparation: A Program to Enhance Student Success

Abstract

- Brief description of proposal
- Statement of purpose of research/project
- Brief description of research design or methods
- Usually word limit of 200-500 words
- Must be clear, concise, comprehensive
- Summary of entire project

Introduction/Purpose

- General overview of main idea of research/project
- Why is research/project important
- Provides some initial background information
- Cite data from sources, i.e. national/international studies/reports from professional organizations

Goals/Objectives

- Goal: Statement that reflects what will be accomplished as result of research/project; Broad statement
- Objective: Specific outcomes of program that can be evaluated either quantitatively or qualitatively or both; Measurable terms
- Can identify hypotheses to be tested if quantitative research study
- Template of what is to be accomplished by research/project
  - Specific Aims of project

Background/Significance

- Demonstration of importance of idea/research/project
- Why should this be important to research conferees/funding agency
- This can also be included in introductory paragraph rather than as a separate section
- Make compelling arguments as to why significant

Theoretical Foundation/ Review of Literature

- When writing a research proposal, critical to show objectives/research questions are supported by theoretical framework
  - Clear; linked to variables to be analyzed
- Comprehensive literature review
  - Timely; relevant; directly related
- Rationale for importance of research/project

Methodology/ Research Plan

- Detailed description of logical steps of plan of grant; Blueprint of research study/project
- If research study, each aspect of research design must be described in detail in logical sequence
  - Overview
  - Sample/Setting
  - Procedures, materials, data collection
  - Human subjects
  - Instruments/Validity and reliability
  - Assumptions/Study limitations
  - Time table for research activities
  - Statistical analysis

Dissemination Plan

- Systematic plan for dissemination of results
  - Presentations at national, international, scientific conferences; professional meetings
  - Publication in professional journals
  - Posting on Virginia Henderson International Nursing Library

Plan of Management

- Why are you the most appropriate person to carry out research/project
  - Expertise
  - Resources
  - Clear, logical, efficient plan
  - Ask yourself, if you were funded….

Team Credentials

- Expertise of each member of team

Institutional Qualifications

- Institutional resources
  - Funding record
  - Comprehensive library
  - Computer facilities
  - Research office

Budget/Budget Justification

- Cost of project with explanations
  - Do not “pad” or inflate budget
  - Do not underestimate costs
  - Know what costs will be covered
  - Address areas such as personnel, supplies, equipment, travel, consultation

References

- Listing of primary sources of information
  - Use APA style unless otherwise stated

Appendices

- Supplemental information to any of the narrative sections
  - Human subject consent form
  - Copies of instruments
  - Letters of support
  - Biosketches of investigators

Mentorship

- Writing Successful Abstracts: A Nurse Mentorship Program for Research Grants and Presentations
- http://www.nursingsociety.org/LeadershipInstitute/pages/default.aspx

Sigma Theta Tau International Grants

- Small Grants
- Doris Bloch Research Award
- Rosemary Berkel Crisp Research Award
- Virginia Henderson Clinical Research Grant
- Joan K. Stout, RN, Research Grant

Sigma Theta Tau International Co-Sponsored Partner Grants

- Alpha Eta Collaborative Research Grant
- American Association of Critical Care Nurses Grant
- American Association of Diabetes Educators Grant
- American Nurses' Foundation Grant
- Association of Nurses in AIDS Care
- Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses Grant

Co-Sponsored Partner Grants (Con't)

- Canadian Nurses' Foundation Grant
- Council of Advancement of Nursing Science Grant
- Educational Assessment Nursing Research Grant
- Emergency Nurses Association Foundation Grant
- Environment of Elder Care Nursing Research Grant

Co-Sponsored Partner Grants (Con't)

- Hospice and Palliative Nurses Foundation End of Life Nursing Care Research Grant
- Midwest Nursing Research Society Research Grant
- National League for Nursing
- Oncology Nursing Society Grant
- Rehabilitation Nursing Foundation Grant
- The Long-Term Care Point-of-Care Diagnostics Research Grant
- Western Institute of Nursing Research Grant

Small Grants Program Information

- For more information about each individual grant, go to:

  http://www.nursingsociety.org/Research/SmallGrants/Pages/grants_small.aspx

  Or log on to the STTI home page at:

  www.nursingsociety.org and click on Research/Library on the left hand column

Contact

- Lois S. Marshall, PhD, RN
  - For copy of PowerPoint presentation or assistance with brainstorming or writing grants
    - lsm4556@aol.com
    - 305-778-9454