Attracting External Research Funding

When writing a project description for external funding always think of your audience. It is essential to use plain English, define your key terms and cite key international and easily accessible references wherever possible.

Succinctness and clarity is key. All funding agencies have a page limit – 6-8 pages is common. A quality application is readable, feasible and interesting.

The following structure may not necessarily suit all submissions. Always read the guidelines and then read them again. Contact the UWS Research Development Team with ANY queries.

This Guide covers the project description of a research submission. Other aspects such as the application form, track record statements, budget justifications and other supporting material (eg. annual reports, media coverage example, financial status statements etc.) are not included here.

PROJECT TITLE
- Use less than 20 words
- Make it catchy and memorable

PROJECT SUMMARY
- Usually limited to 50 – 100 words
- Include aims, outcomes, significance and social and/or economic benefit of the research
- Often best written last
- Language suitable for public release/press
- Can be used as a marketing tool

AIMS
- What is the field? What is the object of the research?
- Keep aims clear and succinct
- Dot points can work well
- Think about the nature of the research – basic, strategic, applied or experimental
- Ask is it genuinely feasible; does it replicate work done elsewhere?

BACKGROUND
- Let the reader know the context of the research issues
- Use subheadings to identify themes and/or other issues
- How do people achieve that objective now?
- Are there any current unresolved issues in your field? Why are they unresolved or unsatisfactory?
- How do you think you will overcome the problem/issue?
- Bring out your knowledge of the field and literature. Let readers know you have the expertise. You are not only selling the idea, but also the researcher and/or research team
- Include information about recent international progress in the field of the research, and the relationship of this proposal to work in the field generally
- Define your key terms and cite key international and easily accessible references wherever possible

SIGNIFICANCE AND INNOVATION
Describe and detail the significance of the research and whether the research addresses an important problem. Ask yourself the following:
- Why undertake the research?
- Will I strengthen basic knowledge?
- Will I provide the answer to an important practical or significant problem?
- Does my project have particular resonance for the future e.g. global environmental issues?
- How will the anticipated outcomes advance the knowledge base of the discipline?
- What is novel and innovative about the approach I am using?
- What new methodologies or technologies will be developed?
APPROACH AND TRAINING

- Describe the conceptual framework
- Describe the design and methods to be used
- Explain how these are appropriate and well integrated with the aims of the project
- Provide step-by-step detail
- How will you collect your data and what will you do with it ie what framework will inform your analysis?
- Convince the reader you understand/have experience in undertaking qualitative/quantitative research

If the research work provides research training explain how the intellectual content and scale of the work proposed will be deserving of a research higher degree.

If the research training is embedded in a larger project – describe/separate the part that the student will focus on.

TIMETABLING

This is a measure of the project’s feasibility.

- Link phases of the research plan/approach with the anticipated timeline
- A chance to let readers know who is doing what
- List any milestones – draft reports etc.
- Build in any ethics clearances required

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

- Describe the expected outcomes and likely impact of the proposed research.
- Link to the aims – what will be the results of what I say I plan to do?
- Be realistic – you will be judged on these outcomes.
- Check the UWS Intellectual Property Policy

COMMUNICATION OF RESULTS

- Outline plans for communicating the research results; think of users and benefits as well
- If formally through journal articles or conference presentations - be specific and give names
- If informally name the interest groups, or type of reports, websites, etc.
- Any media strategies?
- Training of students?

BENEFIT OF THE RESEARCH

Describe how the research project might result in economic and/or social benefits. Ask:

- Why are you doing the research?
- What are the expected benefits for the specific industry and/or industry sector? List separately.
- What are the expected benefits for the Australian community more broadly?

DESCRIPTION OF PERSONNEL

- Summarise the role, responsibilities and contributions of each Investigator
- Who brings what expertise? Which part of the project are they driving if relevant?
- Summarise the roles and levels of involvement of other participants eg technical staff, students, research assistants and/or research associates

REFERENCES

- Include a list of all references. Usually these also must be within the page limit
- Cite only the key international, substantive and easily accessible references wherever possible
- Avoid using a footnote system, use endnotes instead