

Everything (Almost) You Wanted to Know About Review, But Were Afraid to Ask

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Manuscript Submission

- Review papers for journals, to become a better writer
- Be inclusive when selecting co-authors
- PubMed listed and has a reasonable Impact Factor (although important to get to press, any press!!)
- Look for Journal for good turn-around time
- Stick to the journal guidelines (follow the recipe)
- Concise cover letter, highlighting the relevant finding(s) and why your work is worth publishing

Manuscript Review

- 1st level: editorial review (go/no go)
- 2nd level: quality/formal review by editorial staff
- 3rd level: Peer review
- 4th level: Decision: reject, reject but possibility to resubmit/revise and resubmit, accepted with minor modifications (no re-review)
- Quality of the reviews can be quite mixed
- If you get to revise and resubmit, chances are very high that your paper will be accepted, unless there are fatal flaws that you cannot address.
- Point-by-point response is essential

Manuscript Resubmission

- Point-by-point response is essential!
- Be courteous to reviewers; they (often) spent a lot of time, are considered experts and generally enhance your work
- Make it as simple as possible for reviewers
 - Cut and paste the review into a word file
 - Number comments for each reviewer +/- editor
 - Respond in a concise way to each remark that criticizes, asks for clarifications, requests changes
 - Paste in quotation marks your modification (or the part of the text that already addressed the issue at hand)
 - If you do not follow a suggestion, make sure that your arguments are water proof and that you weighed pros and cons before you decided not to follow a suggestion

Grant Planning

- Be up to date on NIMH and other announcements
- Learn about non-NIMH funding agencies
- Contact the program officer early enough
- Contact a statistician soon, as soon as when you are weighting design alternatives
- Read and study carefully good grants
- Learn from mistakes (your own and by others)
- Ask to see successful grants/use them as a template
- PubMed, Google, Clinicaltrials.gov early in the process

Grant Preparation

- Decide which funding agency is best suited for you
- Get the program announcement (request for proposal)
- Look at technical information
- Contact the program officer or equivalent
- Look at list of review committee members (sometimes published)
- Stick to the guidelines
- Tailor grant structure and content to the review criteria
- Get counsel, engage senior colleagues and mentors
- Plan for double the time that you think it will take
- Better to skip one cycle than putting in a substandard grant

Grant Planning

- Spend as much time on the administrative aspects of the grant as the scientific aspects of the grant
- Start requesting letters of support, biosketches, and other support pages soon after writing specific aims and abstracts
- Begin to sketch the budget out as soon as possible
- Understand how much space for each section of the grant and write a detailed outline
- Develop a time line with milestones
- Plan to submit one week prior to the last day (electronic submissions get kicked back with errors)
- Look at how sections of grant application is weighted

Attachment Template	Required Filename	MS Word or PDF Template
1. Introduction to the Revised Application (response to Reviewers)	01_VA_Intro.pdf	01_VA_Intro.doc
2. Specific Aims (New)	02_VA_Specific_Aims.pdf	02_VA_Specific_Aims.doc
2a. Research Plan (Revised)	02a_VA_Research_Plan.pdf	02a_VA_Research_Plan.doc
2b. VA Career Plan (Revised)	02b_VA_Career_Plan.pdf	02b_VA_Career_Plan.doc
2c. Mentoring Plan (Revised)	02c_VA_Mentoring_Plan.pdf	02c_VA_Mentoring_Plan.doc
3. Progress Report and Publications from the Previous Funding Period (Revised)	03_VA_Prog_Report_Pubs.pdf	03_VA_Prog_Report_Pubs.doc
4. Human Subjects	04_VA_Human_Subjects.pdf	04_VA_Human_Subjects.doc
5. Vertebrate Animals	05_VA_Animals.pdf	05_VA_Animals.doc
6. Multiple PD/PI Leadership Plan	06_VA_Multiple_PI.pdf	06_VA_Multiple_PI.doc
7. Consortium/Contractual Arrangements	07_VA_Agreements.pdf	07_VA_Agreements.doc
8. Signed Director's Letter	08_VA_Director_Letter.pdf	(Scan to PDF)
8a. R&D Committee Letter (New; for RCS applications only)	08a_VA_R_D_Committee_Letter.pdf	(Scan to PDF)
8b. Letters of Support (Revised)	08b_VA_Letters.pdf	(Scan to PDF)
9. Electronic Merit Review Checklist (Revised 10/20/14)	09_VA_Checklist.pdf	09_VA_Checklist.doc
10. Appendix 1. List of Abbreviations (Revised; for BLR&D and CSR&D applications)	10_VA_Appendix_1_Abbreviations.pdf	10_VA_Appendix_1_Abbreviations.doc

Additional Format Pages

VA-ORD requires all text attachments in an SF424 (R&R) application to be PDF. However, to avoid system errors, applicants should create text attachments using word processing software and then convert to PDF using PDF-generating software. While Word samples are provided below, applicants will need to convert the finished product to PDF before attaching within an SF424 (R&R) application.

Additional Format Pages	File Link/Format
Biographical Sketch Format Page (New – January 2015)	MS Word
Biographical Sketch Sample (New – January 2015)	MS Word
Targeted/Planned Enrollment Table Format Page	MS Word
Inclusion Enrollment Report Format Page (New Format)	MS Word
Additional Senior/Key Person Profiles (Format provided for those applications requiring > 40 Senior/Key Person Profiles)	MS Word
Additional Performance Sites (Format provided for those applications requiring > 8 Project/Performance Sites)	MS Word

ALSO NEED

Abstract

Lay person statement

Budget

Budget Justification

Other Appendix documents

NIMH 9 Point Score System

Impact	Score	Descriptor	Strengths/Weaknesses
High Impact	1	Exceptional	
	2	Outstanding	
	3	Excellent	
Moderate Impact	4	Very Good	
	5	Good	
	6	Satisfactory	
Low Impact	7	Fair	
	8	Marginal	
	9	Poor	

Non-numeric score options: NR = Not Recommended for Further Consideration, DF = Deferred, AB = Abstention, CF = Conflict, NP = Not Present, ND=Not Discussed

Strengths

- A topic of high importance and impact
- Relevant degree of innovation/incremental gain
- Feasibility data
- Pilot data
- Scalability
- Publications
- The right environment, team and collaborators
- Good mentors
- Succinct and structured writing
- Experience
- Prior success

How to Write to Win Peer Review Points

- Follow the program announcement (PA, RFA, RFP)
- Documents well organized and easy to read
- Leave some white space!!
- Use headers that state the point
- Communicate enthusiasm and commitment
- Letters of support should be individually written, not all the same template

Weaknesses

- Overly Ambitious
- Too many aims and hypotheses
- Sloppy cut-n-paste errors
- Font and margins too small (*they aren't kidding!*)
- Obvious that mentor did not read or edit it
- Feasibility issues are not addressed
- No alternative plan for recruitment (if lagging)
- Human subjects protections inadequate
- “Who cares?” factor
- “So what?” factor

Statistics Matter

- Statistical approach must match the hypothesized outcomes (do not use a categorical analytic plan for a continuous measure)
- Power analysis must match the hypothesis and statistical plan (i.e. categorical vs. continuous)
- Do not rely on pilot data to predict power
- Show a table for sample size, power, and assumptions
- Discuss how you will handle missing data
- Discuss how you will handle multiplicity

If you fail, Try, try again

- Although demoralizing, do not take it personally
- Rejection is common, but failure is rare!
- Revise and Resubmit!!!! It does work
- Start immediately to repair (even before you get the reviews back)
- Include others in the post-mortem

Resubmission Guidelines

(this may look familiar)

- Point-by-point response is essential!
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Resubmission

- Start early with administrative documents
- Read the literature updates
- Perhaps skip a cycle to gather more information, pilot data, consultation, and collaboration

When you get funded

- Savor the moment
- Celebrate
- Just-In-Time Process
- Prepare all operations prior to the launch
- Have an exceptional data management plan with close scrutiny
- Publish your background section from the grant eluding to the need for such a study (you will be considered a visionary)