

Before the Clock Starts: A Checklist of Essential Prewriting Tasks For PIs

May 2006

1. Develop a novel, compelling (that is, fundable) research idea.*
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Define the problem to be addressed by the project.❑ Collect and critically analyze the literature (empirical and theoretical) related to the problem and your approach to solving it.❑ Assess your research idea's potential for success: its originality, significance, and feasibility; your experience, resources, and motivation; your competition's past and present work in this area.❑ Seek constructive criticism on your idea (its originality, significance, and feasibility) from knowledgeable colleagues with expertise in the project's content area.❑ From this assessment, refine your idea for maximum impact on the field.
2. Assess your idea's funding potential.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Search for possible funding sources (e.g., by talking with colleagues, searching SPIN and other databases, searching the Internet, looking at the funding acknowledgements in published articles on your topic).❑ Learn everything you can about potential funding agencies/grant programs: their mission, funding priorities, review criteria, past grantees, funding limits, review panels, etc.❑ Acquire and thoroughly read the grant program's application instructions, review criteria, budget restrictions, other materials.❑ Talk with a program officer at the funding agency about your project idea, then listen carefully to his/her response.
3. Commit to and prepare for the grant writing process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Alert relevant parties (e.g., the Department or Division Head, support staff) of your intention to submit a grant. Provide them with the program announcement, review criteria, budget restrictions.❑ Discuss with the person to whom you report the resources you will need for your project, if funded (research time, space, personnel, etc.)❑ Create time to work on grant (eliminate distractions, block your time, say no!)❑ Decide what preliminary data to include. Conduct any needed analyses.❑ Find/develop appropriate, validated measures.❑ Determine key personnel, set up collaborations, begin requesting biosketches and letters of support.❑ Ensure that all key personnel have received and can appropriately document training in protection of human subjects as required by NIH.

* Text adapted from: Russell SW, Morrison DC. The Grant Application Writer's Workbook. Solvang, CA: Grant Writers' Seminars and Workshops, LLC, February 2002.