Strategies for Developing Winnable Grant Proposals

By

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Objectives

- Essentials of research & grant proposal writing;
- Research grant proposals winning indices;
- Research grant proposals development steps;
- Research grant proposal writing sustainability principles
Pre-workshop Evaluation

1. Have you written research grant proposals before?
   - Yes
   - No

2. Did you win?
   - Yes
   - No

3. If yes, what were the 3 strengths of your proposal?

4. What 3 actions did you take to achieve the strengths

5. If No, what 3 weakness did your proposal have?

6. What 3 actions did you take that led to the weakness?
Introduction: Research Defined

Research is an organised, systematic & scientific effort with objectives of finding answers to questions:

- **Systematic**: process is broken into clear logical steps that lead to valid conclusions;
- **Organised**: a planned structure of actions undertaken to reach a valid conclusion;
- **Scientific**: evidence-based outcome;
- **Objectives**: focus on relevance, usefulness and importance to society & human progress.
Where are the Grants for Research?

Grants for research are offered by local & international organisations (governments, businesses, foundations (NGOs), donor agencies)
Challenge in Accessing Grants for Research?

Inadequacy of:
Why Grant Proposal Writing Skill?

a critical employability skill for quality, visionary & entrepreneurial minded academics.
Why Develop Research Grant Proposal?
SMART Strategy for Research Grants Proposal Development
Research Grants Proposal Development steps
Step 1: Title of Proposed Research

- **Good**
  - Concise title that gives reviewer a general sense of what you are investigating.
  
  *Example: Youths’ unemployment in Nigeria & socioeconomic effects: Empirical Analysis*

- **Reject**
  - Too long and technical of a title will not gain the reviewer’s attention or interest.
  
  *Example: Environmental, economic, sociocultural and political dynamisms of Youths restiveness and oil theft in the Niger Delta.*
  
  - Too short and broad a title will make the reviewer too critical of grant.
  
  *Example: Niger Delta & Hostage taking.*
Step 2: Building Foundation

- Research on grant giving agencies & determine their specific needs & preferences before starting a proposal.
- Carry out comprehensive need analysis to establish the Problem/Rationale the need for your proposed research.
- Dig up solid theoretical, conceptual & empirical evidences to support your proposed research.
- Develop the thesis statement and a time-based structural frame for carrying out the proposed research.
Step 3: Need Analysis

- Carry out objective capacity assessment to identify areas of strength & weakness
- Identify collaborators across disciplines, departments, organisations & locations to mitigate identified weakness.
- Initiate & formalize working relationship with identified collaborators (MOU)
- Set up a formal inception meeting with collaborators
- Assign responsibilities to collaborators
Teaming: Co-applicants

• Good
  – This could be strength if you are a junior investigator with a limited track record.
  – If the initiator lack specific skills, a co-applicant can bring these skills to the research proposal.

• Reject
  – It is a weakness to add a co-applicant if they just give you a reagent
Teaming: Collaborations:

• **Good**
  – Choose a suitable collaborators as complements.
  – Choose referees experienced in the specific area of the proposed research;

• **Reject**
  – Do not choose collaborators based on friendship
  – Do not choose competitors in your field with divergent views.
  – Do not choose the top grantmen in your field since they will not respond and will be too critical in general.
Step 4: Bounding

- Set up a formal inception meeting with collaborators
- Assign responsibilities to collaborators
Step 5: Plan of Operation

- Describe the methodology of implementation, focusing on research design, method of data collection & analysis, sequence of activities, resource requirements & allocation, timelines, duration, deliverables, milestones, success indicators, monitoring, control & evaluation criteria & dissemination of outcomes.

- This must give a complete & clearer understanding of how the proposed research & its implementation system will work.
## Work Plan

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Step 6: Management Plan

- Lay out a detailed financial plan (budget) showing all financial resources accruable including the proposed grant money & how they are to be used as well as internal control and auditing process for probity, transparency & accountability.

- There must be assurance that the grant when given, will be judiciously used in the most efficient & cost effective manner to maximize expected impact.
Budget:

- **Good**
  - Give a detailed account of where you will be spending the money.

- **Reject**
  - Graduate students should not be used in budget support since it is an easy target for reduction due to alternative funding sources.
  - Do not justify spending all the budget on personnel.

**All other Operating Grants**

- **Good**
  - Declare all operating grants.
  - It is reasonable to apply from multiple sources to get funding.
Key Personnel

• Brief professional resume (CV) of key resource persons (especially the team leader), focusing on skills, experience & referrals on similar previous undertaking.

• This section must prove that a competent team have been assembled to plan & execute the proposed research successfully.
Step 7: Getting Ready to Submit?

- Receive submissions from each collaborator
- Arrange review meeting with collaborators
- Receive revised submission & assemble draft proposal
- Submit draft proposal to at least two experienced colleague to review.
- Write the abstract/Executive summary
- Develop table of content
- Develop a brief, smart and explicit title page
- Collate literature materials cited in a Reference
- Develop submission letter
- Receive review comments from colleagues
Getting Ready to Submit?

- Revise draft proposal to incorporate comments
- Organised proposal:
  1. Title page
     Abstract or Executive Summary
  2. Introduction (problem, need analysis, research questions/hypotheses, significance)
  3. Literature Evidences
  4. Plan of operation (research design, methods of data collection & analysis, time schedule etc.)
  5. Key Personnel
  6. Management Plan (budget and justification)
  7. References
Step 8: Submission

- Submission may be electronic or manual.
- Make sure you have a high speed internet access.
- Make sure you don’t wait till the last minutes to submission deadline as traffic to the portal will be very busy.
- Do the submission yourself.
- Ensure you attach all the relevant supporting documents (if necessary) at the appropriate section of the proposal.
- Ensure you get confirmation of receipt of your submission.
Step 9: Follow up

- Ensure you have active communication media (phone & email) as there may be need to call you.
- Visit the website of the grant maker regularly for update of announcements.
- Send polite mails to the desk officer if after expiration of scheduled grant award announcement you have no feedback.
- Exercise patience as announcement of award may take quiet sometime.
Step 10: News of a win Announcement?

Great!

- Congratulations you now have
Kick start preparations for research implementation, while waiting for receipt of first trench of the grant money
Step 10: News of a ‘No win’?

- Congratulate yourself & your team for the effort & sustain collaborations.
- Receive & study reviewers’ evaluation report for areas of proposal strength & weakness.
- Start work immediately by searching and identifying other grant givers whose area of interest are related to your idea contained in the proposal.
- Improve areas of weakness, while further improving the areas of strength.
- Adapt the proposal to the requirements of the identified grant giver.
Step 11: Sustain Research Grant Proposal Writing

- Keep networking with successful grant writers
- Make sure you deliver on promise if you get a grant (professional ethics)
- Learn to be a good team player (personal & social ethics)
- You must not be the team leader even when you are the originator of the research idea, if your qualification is not appropriate.
step 12: ?

Research Grant Proposal Writing Continues
Conclusion

- Critical thinking and writing are key skills of grantmanship;
- Team work is a critical success factor in research grant proposal winning;
- Professionalism and ethical conduct are driver of repeated research grant proposal winning.
- Grantmanship is an employability skill every forward-looking and entrepreneurial minded academic must possess in the face of increasing funding gap of our University.
Issues to note

• Research grants are scare resource that are only attracted by intelligence capital;
• Failing many times to win, opens windows for sustained big future wins;
• Going alone in seeking research grants, is a walk; while going in teams, is actually working.
• Grant winnings occurs when preparedness meets opportunities;
• Ethical conduct is a research grant writing sustainability factor
• In Grant writing, ‘think big but start small’
The End
Thank you for your attention