



What is an Effective Abstract in a Funding Application?

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28.8.2019

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Methods Festival 27.-29.8.2019



Why do you write a research grant proposal? 1/2

- Most researchers define a grant proposal as a request for money.
- To achieve the best results and move more surely toward their missions, researchers need to think of grants in a different way.



Why do you write a research grant proposal? 2/2

- For funders a grant award is an investment in positive change. It's a tool they use for having an **impact** on issues they care about.
- **A grant is a tool** researchers use to address important issues within their communities.
- A grant proposal is **a call to action**. A research grant proposal is a well-supported argument **for change**.
- **STUDY THE PROFILE OF THE FUNDING AGENCY!**
 - See Barbara Floersch, <https://www.tgci.com/what-grant-proposal>

The role of the abstract of the proposal

- the first stop for your reader
- provides a clear summary of your study
- includes some scene-setting information which includes what is already known about the subject
- sets out the purpose of your research
- encourages your readers to read more

Why do you do this study or project?

What do you plan to do and **how**?

What do your **findings mean**?

Proposal review criteria 1/2

Academy of Finland:

- **scientific quality, innovativeness and novelty of the research plan**
- **scientific impact of the research**
- competence of the applicant/the research team
- **feasibility of the research plan** ('the possibility that can be made, done, or achieved, or is reasonable')
- quality and strengthening of the research environment
- international and national research collaborations, researcher mobility
- project's significance for the promotion of professional research careers

Review criteria? 2/2

Research questions! Hypotheses! Methods!

- “The research question will evolve as a result of reflection following a thorough **literature review**, **discussions** with the other members of the research team and input from collaborators. The research question will usually also be modified **in the light of practical considerations** such as **numbers of potential study participants and costs**. Once the question is set it defines all other aspects of the project from the duration of the project to the data to be collected and how it is to be analysed.”
- **Success in grant writing is a matter of style and format as much as content.**
- <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1751722215001985>

About the impact

In the abstract of the bigger research project, it can be mentioned 'products', eg.

- prototypes, patents
- Policy Briefs
- Good Practice Guidelines
- Decision support system
- Industry workshop, training courses
-in smaller research proposals as well, it is important to clarify research impact: 'wealth and prosperity', 'basis for decision-making', practice development', etc.

Grant writing

- Sponsor goals
 - Service attitude
 - Future oriented
 - Work that should be done
 - Project-centered
 - Objectives and activities
 - Explaining to reader
 - Conveys excitement
 - Team-focused
 - Strict length constraints
 - Brevity rewarded
 - Accessible language
 - Easily understood
- see Porter, R.2007.

STRUCTURE, Your storyline?

- 'There is the problem'
- 'No one has solved it' or 'noticed it'
- 'This research is the answer!'

Compared to the current research this research brings **something new**, eg. new methodological perspective, new kind of multidiscipline research

Methods - contain enough information to enable the reader to understand what will be done, and how

-brief details of the research design, sample size, duration of study, and so on.

The story continues by specifying the phenomenon in focus and the meaning of the new approach (for example), more specific problems are defined

The objectives of the research are defined, eg. 1., 2. and 3.

- **'Who are interested in this, need this research?'**
- 'The closing of the successful story'

See the abstracts of the funded research projects, eg. ERC (European Research Council)

<https://erc.europa.eu/projects-figures/erc-funded-projects>

Flow in the text

time

Before, meanwhile, later, soon, at last, earlier, thereafter, afterward, by that time, from then on, first, second, third, next, now, presently, shortly, immediately, finally, at this time, thereafter, formerly, previously, at this point, during, before, after

to compare

Likewise, similarly, once again, once more, like, likewise, by comparison, similar to

to contrast

But, yet, however, although, whereas, though, even so, nonetheless, still, on the other hand, on the contrary, besides, conversely, in contrast, instead, nevertheless, regardless, whereas, while, yet, although, despite, unlike

to conclude

As a result, consequently, therefore, hence, for this reason, in summary, in other words, on the whole, thus, in conclusion, hence, ultimately, finally

to add

Again, also, and, and then, besides, equally, further(more), in addition (to...), indeed, next, in fact, moreover, too, what is more, finally, additionally, further

to contradict

However, whereas, while, still, alternatively, nevertheless, on the other hand, instead, in spite of, in contrast, even though



Evaluation; some examples from review documents(EU projects) 1/2

- *The proposal focuses on **socially important** issues in the **global scale**.*
- *The importance of the **research questions** is clearly justified.*
- *The **research methodology** is appropriate.*
- *The reviewers agreed that this **novel approach** is important but **not really ground-breaking**.*
- *There were significant concerns about the lack of conceptualization and operationalization of the **key concept X***

Evaluation; some examples from review documents) 2/2

- *The **target groups for dissemination** of project's results are clearly specified.*
- *The **includes a gender balance** component.*
- *The communication and dissemination of the research results are not fully described in the proposal, in particular in relation to **academic dissemination and public engagement**.*
- *The proposal does not provide sufficient detail on the **potential benefit** to...*
- *The **structure** for the research is clearly outlined and appropriate.*
- *The project is extremely well structured. There is a **fluency in the logic** of the research.*



Checklist with the abstract

Generic:

- ✓ Is my abstract responding to the expectations of the funding body (related to the amount of funding, duration of funding, priorities of funding body)?
- ✓ Is the background work expressed optimally on the abstract (thorough literature review is done)?
- ✓ Research question(s), methods, objectives?
- ✓ Is the abstract clear, concise and systematic **with maximum impact**? (have you asked feedback about this?)
- ✓ Is the length of the abstract filling the given space?
- ✓ Is there the flow on the text? (incl. language checking?)
- ✓ Is the structure of the abstract so clear that I could tell about it if someone asked?



References

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- The University of Adelaide. Writing Cohesively and Achieving Flow.