How to write a good research grant application
Content, Structure, How to Write and How to Get Ready

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Overview

Content of a good case for support.

The case for support must make four propositions.

How the case for support makes the four propositions

Structure of a good case for support

How to write the case for support.

How to write the Description of the Project

Write the background subsection by subsection

Write the Introduction, using sentences you wrote earlier.

How to get ready to write a grant application.

Writing Resources

The case for support must make four propositions.

- A Grant Application makes the case that a project deserves investment because it will solve an important problem.
- Typically the case consists of four propositions.
  - The propositions dictate the content of the case for support.
  - IMPORTANCE: The research problem is important to the funder, as defined by their remit.
  - SUCCESS: The project offers a realistic promise of a solution
    - Research Design
    - Dissemination
  - VALUE: The resources requested are:-
    - Necessary
    - Sufficient
    - Appropriate to the scale of the problem
  - COMPETENCE: PI, team and institution are capable of carrying out the project.
- The Case for Support must contain evidence to support these four propositions.

How the case for support makes the four propositions

IMPORTANCE Explains the research question
- ▸ Cites evidence that it is important.

SUCCESS Describes the research project
- ▸ Explains methods.
- ▸ Shows that the project answers the question.
- ▸ Explains what will be done with the answer.

VALUE Describes how resources are used in the project.
- ▸ Shows you need what you are asking for.
- ▸ Shows you have everything else.

COMPETENCE Describes your contribution to the question.
- ▸ Cite your papers that use the research methods.
- ▸ May describe facilities & achievements.
- ▸ May require CVs
- ▸ Cite Institutional support

How to write the case for support

- Which section do you write first?
- How do you write each section?

Which section do you write first?

- ▶ Introduction?

- ▶ Background?

- ▶ Description of the project?

Which section do you write first?

- ► Introduction?
  - ► No: the introduction introduces the background and the description of the project
- ► Background?
  - ► No: that is the trap of the never-ending grant application.
- ► Description of the project?

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  - ▶ No: the introduction introduces the background and the description of the project
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- ▶ Description of the project?
  - ▶ Yes: until this is written, you cannot write the background or the introduction.

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- ▶ Introduction?
  - ▶ No: the introduction introduces the background and the description of the project
- ▶ Background?
  - ▶ No: that is the trap of the never-ending grant application.
- ▶ Description of the project?
  - ▶ Yes: until this is written, you cannot write the background or the introduction.
- ▶ Other reasons to start by writing the description of the project
  - ▶ You can't tell whether the project is do-able until you have described it.
  - ▶ You can't tell whether the project is affordable until you have described it.
  - ▶ You can design the project by writing and testing the description.
  - ▶ You can start working on costings more quickly.

How to write the Description of the Project

1. Describe a piece of research you want to do (a sub-project) and check that the description includes
   - What will be done, how, when, by whom, with what resources.
   - What will be discovered by this sub-project
   - How the discovery will be derived and disseminated
   - See bit.ly/UYRCuR for a checklist
2. Maintain lists of resources (applied for and existing), of research techniques, and of discoveries.
3. Check the project for completeness, coherence, feasibility, cost
4. Repeat steps 1–4 until you have a list of about 4 sub-projects.
5. Add a general methods intro and a tailpiece about dissemination
6. See researchfundingtoolkit.org/?p=340 for more detail.
7. This section should be at least 50% of the case for support.

Write the background subsection by subsection

- ▶ Write a subsection that corresponds to each of the sub-projects.
  - ▶ It should explain why we need to know what the sub-project will discover.
  - ▶ It should justify the explanation by citing literature
  - ▶ It can refer forward to the sub-project that will discover the answer
  - ▶ They should be in the same order as the sub projects that answer them
- ▶ Write an introductory sub-section that explains that the aim of the project is to answer an overall question that encompasses all of the sub-questions
- ▶ Explain, referring to literature, why the overall question is important.
- ▶ See researchfundingtoolkit.org/?p=384 for more detail.
- ▶ This section should be less than 30% of the case for support.

Write the Introduction, using sentences you wrote earlier.

- ▸ Ensure that the Background and Project Description sections are in 'assert then justify' style.
  - ▸ Find the 'message sentence' in each paragraph
  - ▸ Move it to the beginning
  - ▸ Edit the paragraph so it makes sense
  - ▸ See researchfundingtoolkit.org/?p=423 for more detail.
- ▸ Copy message sentences verbatim into the Introduction
- ▸ Edit for readability
- ▸ It should be less than 20% of the total case for support.
- ▸ Most of it can be re-used in the summary.
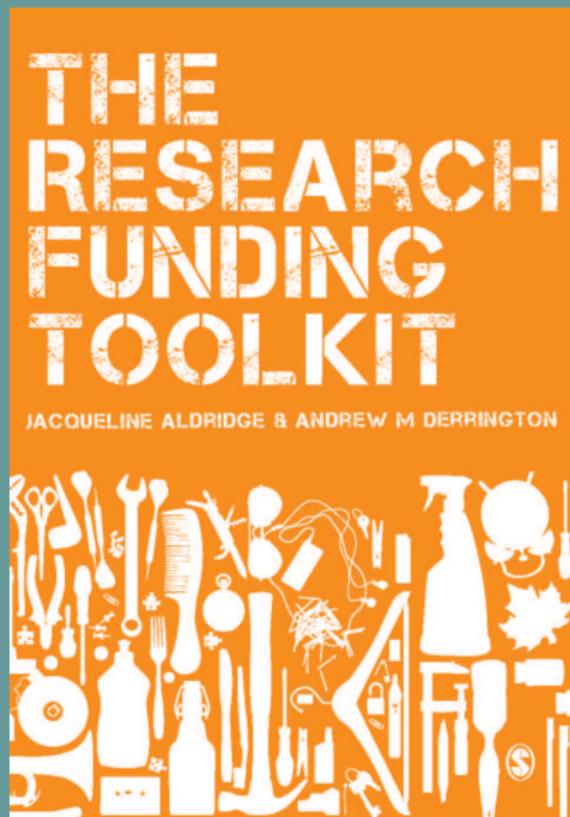- ▸ See researchfundingtoolkit.org/?p=428 for more detail.

How to get ready to write a grant application.

- ▶ The first step is to describe four sub-projects.
  1. Describe a piece of research you want to do (a sub-project) and check that the description includes
     - ▶ What will be done, how, when, by whom, with what resources.
     - ▶ What will be discovered by this sub-project
     - ▶ How the discovery will be derived and disseminated
     - ▶ See bit.ly/UYRCuR for a checklist
- ▶ Get used to thinking about your research in these terms.
  - ▶ Discoveries and why we need to know them
  - ▶ Techniques, publications and collaborators
  - ▶ Resources
    - ▶ who will let you use them
    - ▶ who will fund them
- ▶ Build yourself a library of possible sub-projects.

Writing Resources

- Book: The Research Funding Toolkit, by Jacqueline Aldridge and Andrew Derrington, Sage 2012
- Blog: researchfundingtoolkit.org/gfol/
- These slides are available on the resources page researchfundingtoolkit.org/resources/
- Case for Support Checklist bit.ly/10Nr9FK
- SubProject Checklist bit.ly/UYRCuR
- Project Description Checklist bit.ly/R8xVoV

I wrote a book that says all this

And I will be happy to come and explain it again

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