

PREPARING RESEARCH PROPOSALS FOR RESEARCH GRANTS/PROJECTS

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Research Grants or Projects requirements vary from funding institution to institution. Most funding agencies/institutions have a specific set of requirements or research areas/topics that they are looking to extend financial support to. The Research Proposal, its components and the budget need to be aligned to these requirements and the application guidelines put forth by the funding institution.

SOME POINTS TO REMEMBER WHILE APPLYING FOR RESEARCH GRANTS/PROJECTS:

- The guidelines mentioned by the funding agency/ institutions for the application and research proposal should be followed to the tee.
- Be aware of the deadline. Most Government Agencies or Departments require the hard copy of the Proposal and the requisite documents to reach them via post before the stated deadline.
- Always send the Proposal and documentation with a cover letter on the institutions letterhead.
- The grant amount is generally specified by the funding agencies. The tentative budget breakup for the grant and activities to be conducted should be realistic and achievable.
- The research questions and objectives should be aligned to the research topic and the requirements of the funding agency. Moreover, the methods and proposed outcome of the research project should have an explicit/direct connection to the research objective, questions and research topic.

HOW TO FIND PROSPECTIVE RESEARCH GRANTS/ PROJECTS AND START PREPARING A RESEARCH PROPOSAL:

- Research grants can be from specific Government bodies/ministries/departments, NGOs and private foundations (United Nations, World Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation etc.) or research and educational bodies (CSIR, UGC, ICSSR) or the industry. Make sure that your research objective and the funding agencies research requirements align.
- The websites of these institutions as well as newspapers should constantly be checked for any Call for Proposals or Request for Proposals (RFP) for a Research Grant/Project.
- Look into the eligibility/expertise requirements of institutions/individuals that can be given the grant/project. See whether the Research topic, deliverables, budget and timeline align with your or your institutions research interest and capacity/specialization.
- Apart from the Call for Proposal/RFP documents/guide, carry out a background research on the funding agency, their activities and areas of specialization. This can

be done to align the Proposal and the research that is proposed to be conducted to the requirements of the funding agency.

- Pay attention to the application requirements, conditions and other documents that are to be submitted to the funding institution. (Audited accounts, annual reports of the institution, registration of the institution etc.) Non submission of the supporting documents may result in the rejection of the application/ proposal.

STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE PROPOSAL

Most funding agencies provide a sample format that is to be followed for the preparation of the Research Proposal. Most research proposals consist of the following content:

- **Title of the Research Project**

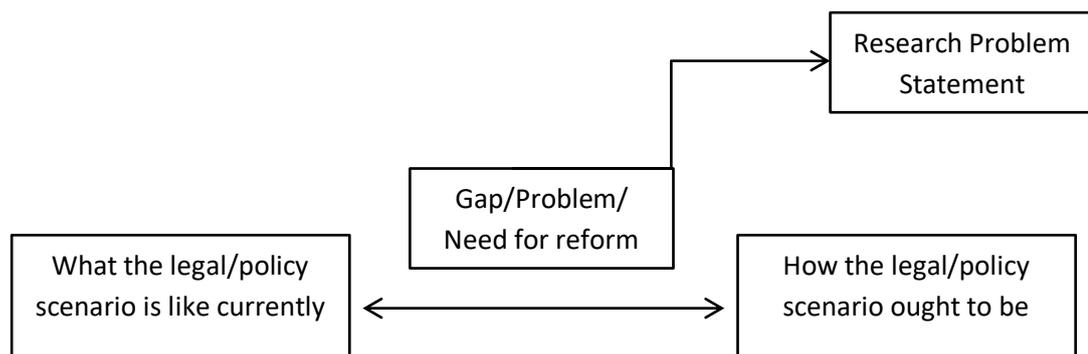
The Research Project title briefly encapsulates the scope of the research project. Make sure that the title is succinct and reflects the primary objective/outcome of the research undertaken.

- **Background to the topic**

Keep the background short and to the point. Unlike a literature review, the background should chart out the brief history and current position of the research problem that is being targeted or proposed to be studied. Make sure that the literature being researched for the background is up to date. The background should demonstrate that you know the field thoroughly.

- **Statement of the Research Problem**

In order to identify a substantial research problem, one must first identify that an actual problem or gap exists in the policy or regulatory framework that the research proposes to target. Make sure that the problem is significant and there is a need or requirement for research to be undertaken in that area. The subject of research, the methodology or any other significant component of your approach to the research should not have been undertaken earlier, so as to lend a novel component to the research. The difference between an academic research proposal and a proposal for a grant or project is that the problem is current and the research must be focused to provide outcomes/ recommendations/tools that are of substantial worth to the funding agency and are actionable. The problem statement should not be more than a few lines.



- **Research Aim, Objectives and Outcome**

The research aim and objectives should meet the mission of the funding agency or the Scheme/Grant under which the agency has called for proposals. The aim and objectives of the research undertaken should be clear and concise and should flow from the problem statement or research problem identified. It should suggest steps to remedy the problem identified or recommend steps to reduce the gap between the status quo and the ideal scenario. The aim and objectives should be stated using *action verbs* and should be measurable and realistic and should directly be aligned to the Project Title. Words such as to describe, to assess, to calculate, to determine etc. should be used while framing the same.

Example

- Research Title: *The Socio- Economic Impact of MGNREGA on Beneficiaries: A Case Study of Bellary District in Karnataka*
- Research Aim: *To assess the socio-economic impact of MGNREGA on beneficiaries in Bellary District in Karnataka*
- Research Objectives:
 - *To determine the impact of MGNREGA on socio- economic development of beneficiaries in Bellary District in Karnataka*
 - *To ascertain the legal and regulatory bottlenecks in the implementation of MGNREGA in Bellary District in Karnataka*
 - *To suggest reforms and strategies for effective implementation of MGNREGA in Bellary District in Karnataka*

The Research outcomes are the main deliverables or the result of the research being undertaken. The outcome should be concrete and identifiable such as a policy document, report encapsulating recommendations or any substantial findings adding to the existing literature and understanding of the research area.

- **Methodology**

The overall **research methodological approach/type of research** (quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods approach) for the Project should be stated first and the reason for the adoption of the particular approach should also be given. The method and design being used for the research should be aligned with the aim and objectives of the research. The Research Design should encapsulate the Data Collection methods, sources and tools. [Methods (quantitative, qualitative, descriptive, explanatory) sources (primary, secondary), tools (questionnaires, interviews, checklists)].

Information such as the sampling size, the research sampling method and data analysis tools and methods should also be stated in the Proposal.

- **How is the objective related to the objective of the Scheme under which the grant is given/ objective of the institution**

The funding institutions or scheme/grants mission should not be contorted or interpreted in a fashion so as to fit the research project. The applicant institution should explain how the objectives/ outcome of the project align with the mission statement of the funding institution and how the proposed deliverables would assist in achieving those objectives.

- **Activity based Timelines of the project**

Should be as per the requirements of the agency (usually mentioned in the RFP) and as per the capacity of the institution proposing to undertake the research.

- **Total cost with activity-wise break up**

The format is generally provided in the RFP. The activities proposed to be undertaken should be practicable and within the capacity of the institution. The corresponding costs should be reasonable and should reflect the real actual or best estimate of the cost of undertaking the activity. The activities proposed to be undertaken should be such that they fulfil the aim/objective of the Project. It should be in direct alignment of the Project goals.

- **Composition of the research team**

Make sure that the members included in the team either have prior experience in the relevant field/ research area and/or possess the requisite research experience/expertise required for fulfilling the project deliverables.

- **List of research project undertaken**

The prior research projects undertaken and current projects being executed by the institution with the name of the funding agency, the title, duration and primary objective of the project are to be mentioned. This information can be presented in a tabular format.

LANGUAGE TO BE USED IN THE PROPOSAL

The language for the proposal should be formal and readable. Legalese and grandiose language should be avoided. The proposal should not be highly technical or detailed, and at the same time not too general. The level of detail required should be gauged from the type of institution funding the project and the requirements as mentioned in the RFP. There should not be repetition of content, ideas or facts in the proposal. If repetition is unavoidable, the content should be put forth or constructed in a different manner, however not changing the intent of what is being put forth. One should ensure that the language, sentence construction and wordings are used in such a manner that they convey the intended meaning of project applicant. The formatting should be consistent and as per the requirements mentioned in the RFP. The Proposal should be thoroughly checked and proof read for grammatical and sentence construction errors prior to the submission.

