Components of a Successful Research Proposal
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The research proposal is a very particular genre of writing. It does _not_ have the same structure as a dissertation prospectus or a research article. A successful research proposal is divided into four parts, which should use descriptive headings.

1. "What"

The description of the project specifies the topic of research independently and without reference to the temporal, spatial, or formal and generic contexts of research. This is customarily referred to as the "Review of the Literature," and in this section the applicant describes the state of play with respect to a field of knowledge that usually encompasses more than a single discipline. This section of the proposal provides evidence that there is a problem or gap in knowledge on which research can make an important contribution. For some research agencies, it can be valuable to specify what is to be learned in terms of propositions called "hypotheses." For other agencies this would be very counterproductive and a more discursive style is associated with successful grants. It is very important to describe your project in terms that the particular funding committees find to be comfortable.

2. "Where" or sometimes "When"

This section of the proposal specifies the spatial or temporal contexts of the research. This may be a region, such as the American South, a time, such as the Renaissance, or, usually both—for example, "Renaissance Florence," or "Precolonial Western Kenya." It includes a description of what forms of human behavior, culture or society are to be investigated—for example, "The Epic Among the Precontact Quechua Speaking People of Ecuador," or "Political Consensus in the European Parliament." In this section the applicant presents what is known, what aspects of the knowledge base are contested, and describes what the research will find out. Customarily the temporal or geographical scale of this section starts out large and moves to smaller scale topics that will be the actual research topic. Thus a proposal might move from "Democratic Politics in Africa," to "Multiparty Elections in Kenya," or an art historian might start with the iconography of religion in Renaissance art and wind up with a study of municipal buildings in Sienna. In this section the applicant specifies their contribution to understanding social, cultural and formal processes in a broadly defined place and/or time and moves to more specific locales. This is a critical part of the proposal for many applicants wishing to conduct international research, since many committees that fund this type of research are composed of an interdisciplinary array of scholars who are held together by a shared commitment to place, such as African Studies or Latin American or European Studies. They want to know what the payoff is not for a specific discipline, but for knowledge of a region and/or time.

3. "How"

Commonly called methodology, this section of a proposal specifies the methods that will be used in the research. The selection of methods is determined almost entirely by the nature of the research and not by a predetermined set of methods learned in a course. This means that you have to justify each and every method by its relationship to the topic, place and time of research, and, especially, the nature of what is to be studied. Fulfilling this requirement, which is vital for a successful proposal, can only be achieved when the "How" section refers continually

to the specifics of the research context. It is not enough to say that "I will do close readings of archival materials." Instead the applicant specifies the archive, describes the materials in it, and provides an account of what he or she will do with the materials.

An ideal methods or "how" section has four components to it:
- A. Specification of Data Sources
- B. Methods of Data Collection
- C. Description of Data Analysis
- D. Synthesis with the "What" and "Where" sections presented above

4. "Who"

This section justifies to the funders why the applicant is the person to do the research. It is not a life history and account of moral development, unless that is specifically asked for. Instead it provides an account of the applicant's qualifications and how they were acquired, **or will be acquired**. Included in this section can be descriptions of course work, methods training, work on languages, time spent at the research site doing preliminary research, and progress made on research clearances, where that is relevant. The applicant may also want to describe how the research will relate to an academic, research, or other kind of career that he or she anticipates taking up.

Supporting Materials

The following are the kinds of supporting materials often asked for by specific funding agencies. It is important to know ahead of time which materials the funding agencies want and to plan to put your proposal together well ahead of time. If, for example, you are going to conduct research in a language not available at your university, then you must make arrangements to be tested elsewhere. In some cases this testing can be done when doing preliminary research in the field. Other kinds of supporting materials can include letters from the archives at which you wish to conduct research and letters from the scholars who may be your supervisors, as well as documents granting you permission to do research.

1. Letters of Recommendation
2. Evidence of Language Training and Competence. Some agencies may have specific forms.
3. Certificates of Training
4. Evidence of Access to Research Materials (affiliations, prior contacts, etc.)
5. IRB Certification or some other certification of ethical conduct of research

Components of a Well-crafted Budget
(added by Corinne Kratz)

Crafting a good budget for your research project is one way to think through the project in very concrete terms and to prepare to do the research. At the same time, your budget is one way you convince reviewers of your ability, professional level, and capacity to plan and complete the project.

A good budget always has two parts: a) the specific budget categories/figures and b) justifications for the figures listed. The budget can be presented in a number of ways, but must always include both parts.

Budget categories might include air travel, local travel, accommodation while in the field or archival location away from home, specific supplies or services, and so forth, depending on the project design and needs. The items included should clearly relate to the research plan you outline in your proposal.

Figures listed for each budget category must be justified. Research the costs and options so that you can explain what the figures are based on.

For example:

Roundtrip airfare to archives in Gaberone   ZAR 4,500.
   (SAA, Cape Town - Gaberone fare)

Accommodation   ZAR 7,000.
   (Sunshine guesthouse/dorm for 4 weeks @ ZAR 250/day)

Examples of other budget formats can be found online. For instance, the sample budget at this website lists budget categories and figures in a table, with justifications explained below: http://writingcenter.unc.edu/handouts/grant-proposals-or-give-me-the-money/#example1. This site includes four additional examples: https://undergradresearch.wustl.edu/creating-budget.

In general, your budget should be realistic, reasonable and economical. It should cover research expenses that are necessary, adequate, and appropriate. Don't over-budget, don't under-budget, and don't include a large "miscellaneous" category. Those are all signs to reviewers that you have not thought the project and budget through thoroughly. A well-crafted, thorough budget, however, can help you plan your project and demonstrate that you have thought it through and are ready to complete it.

On research assistants, transcription, and equipment
        *If you request funds for research assistance, explain why you need this help. Explain in detail what aspects of the research you will carry out and which aspects the research assistant will be responsible for. Provide justification for the assistant's payment level in the context of the appropriate wage rate for your research site. Clearly specify the amount of time they will work.
        *If you request funds for transcription costs, provide equally detailed justification. Account for the payment level, explain the need for assistance, and describe what proportion of this work the assistant will carry out and what proportion you yourself will cover. Explain how you plan to use the transcriptions in analyzing your data. It is important to make a strong case for why you need word-for-word transcriptions given the goals of your project.
        *Grantees are usually expected to participate in all aspects of the research. Do not hire others to carry out activities that could give you valuable experience and insight. This is particularly relevant to requests for research and transcription assistance.
        *If your budget includes equipment purchase(s) (e.g., laptop; photo, video, or audio equipment), you should clearly and specifically justify the request in relation to planned work and successful project completion, show that the request is for cost-effective equipment appropriate to your research that you do not otherwise have access to, and explain what you plan to do with the equipment at the end of your project (e.g. donate to an educational organization related to your research).