Writing implementation research grant proposals: 10 key ingredients

Enola Proctor, Byron Powell, Ana Baumann, Ashley Hamilton, & Ryan Santens

Implementation Science, 2012
Challenges universal to all grant writers

How to demonstrate capacity to successfully complete a study as proposed?
Additional challenges for implementation researchers

• Rising scientific bar:
  – Science of implementation demands moving beyond documentation of barriers

• Implementation research is complex & complicated

• Literature scattered across disciplines

• Implementation science is setting specific but must advance generalizable science
Session overview

- Challenges facing IR
- Ten tips for grant writing
- Importance of working with program staff
Our approach & sources

• Experience with
  – Early career implementation researchers
  – Successful implementation research proposals

• Grant PARs
  – R03, R21, R34, R18, R01

• Literature
  – On pilot/feasibility/preliminary studies
  – On stages of implementation

• Queries to experienced implementation researchers
Most important

the question
Ten Key Ingredients of a Competitive IR Grant Application

(no application will have all 10)
1. Need for improvement...reducing gap between care that is and could be

Contribution: Project’s PH Significance & Impact

Important to demonstrate:
- Poor health services or wide variation
- Potential to improve care thru proposed work

How?
- Literature
- Preliminary data
2. Evidence-based intervention to be implemented

Contribution: Project’s PH Significance & Impact

Demonstrate:
- Strong evidence
- Ready for implementation

How?
- Literature
- Preliminary data
3. Conceptual model/ theoretical framework

Justifies key variables to be tested

Contribution:
  – Innovation for implementation science
  – Scientific impact & generalizable knowledge gain

How?
  – Published papers
  – Use throughout proposal text!
Contribution: Significance, impact, & feasibility of success

How?
- Preliminary data (qualitative, quantitative)
- Evidence of past partnerships (joint publications)
- Method detail (partnered research)
- Letters
5. Setting’s readiness to adopt new intervention

Contribution:

– Scientific generalizability & impact
– Shows PI knowledge of study setting

How to convey?

– Preliminary data
– Letters
The observed/introduced change strategy

**Contribution:**
- Public health significance
- Impact
- Feasibility

**How?**
- Detail in planned approach
- Literature cited
- Preliminary studies
- Specify, provide manuals (Proctor et al, 2014)
7. Team experience w/ setting, treatment, implementation

Contribution:
- Feasibility
- Capacity to complete study as proposed

How?
- Build team, cite work
- Describe relevant experience in preliminary studies
- Biosketches, budget justifications
- Letters
8. Feasibility of proposed research design & methods

Value: Conveys
- Feasibility of completing study as proposed
- Investigator capacity (understanding of unique IR challenges)

How?
- Detailed “approach” section
- Address choice junctures & contingencies
- Preliminary recruitment & enrollment data
- Letters (re: willingness to be randomized)
9. Measurement and analysis detail

Contribution:
- Approach
- Feasibility of completing study as proposed

How?
- Detailed measurement plan
- Variation data
- Unit of analysis specified & consistent
- Analysis will exploit data and answer Q’s
10. Policy environment will leverage, support, sustain the change

Contribution:
- Public health significance
- Impact
- Sustainability
- Feasibility

How?
- Background literature
- Letters
- Resources & Environment
Can’t fit it all in!

Relative importance in eyes of experienced reviewers?

**Most essential (1)**

- Background of EST to be implemented
- Team’s experience with setting/TX/implementation process
- Research environment’s capacity to support IR
How to address these challenges?

• Make strategic use of all grant application parts!

• Draw on your experiences
  – pilot studies
  – work & research training experiences

• Caveat: Not every application can/should include equal detail on each component
National Institute of Mental Health
R25 MH080916

Clinical and Translational Science Award (CTSA) program of the National Center for the Research Resources (NCRR) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH)
UL1 RR024992
Enola Proctor
314-935-6660
ekp@wustl.edu

No financial interests