



Guidelines for Writing a Proposal

Small Scale Research Grants in Reproductive Health in Pakistan



The Bill and Melinda Gates Institute for
Population and Reproductive Health

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Guidelines for Cover Page¹

The numbers in the sections below correspond to the numbers on the Proposal Cover Page. There is also additional information to help you ensure your proposal is complete.

1. Thematic area

Please write about the thematic area of your research proposal. The theme must cover any aspect of Reproductive Health.

2. Project title

Enter the complete title of your proposed project, including type of study and location.

3. Principal Investigator (PI)

Enter the name and all relevant contact details of the Principal Investigator.

4. Co-investigator(s) (if any)

Please enter the name(s) and contact information of co-investigator(s) in your project.

5. Location

Give the name of the location where research will be conducted.

6. Duration of Project

Please enter the proposed project dates and duration of your study (the maximum length of the project should not exceed 12 months).

7. Funds Requested (Rs.)

In this section, please indicate the total budget requested in Pakistani rupees.

8. Signature of Principal Investigator and Date

The signature of the Principal Investigator for this research project and the date of signing this cover page must be entered.

¹N.B. Please ensure that the information you enter on the cover page corresponds with the information in your project proposal throughout your project proposal.

Guidelines for Proposal

The following pages contain instructions on how to write a complete proposal:

A. Project Abstract

This is a summary of the project and should be structured to contain all relevant details of the research proposal including the overall goal of the project, the methodology to be carried out and the expected results.

B. Project Description

i. Background/literature review

Briefly describe the background of this research. Describe the work of others and of the Principal Investigator, referencing the published literature. You need to demonstrate that you are aware of the important studies and developments which are relevant to your current project. The Harvard style of referencing must be used.

ii. Rationale

This will explain why your proposed research is important and what new information will your project add to the field. You need to justify doing this project.

- Why is it useful to ask the question you are asking now?
- How will you answer this question?
- What methodology will you use to answer this question?
- Is this the best methodology or the best way to answer this question?
- Does this question need to be asked?
- Does this question need to be answered? Why?
- Has this question been asked by any one else previously in the same way or similar way?
- How does your project differ from previous work?

Explain your reasoning and how your project contributes to the body of knowledge about your chosen topic. Describe how the expected outcomes of your study will contribute to filling critical gaps in RH knowledge within your chosen theme area and how this knowledge can be utilized for policy making.

iii. Research Question/hypothesis/objectives

State briefly the specific aims of the present research. Briefly indicate the expected results, if possible.

iv. Methodology

You will need to give a detailed explanation of the methods that you will use to answer your research question(s) or prove or disprove your hypothesis (es). The methods that you select needs to be carefully chosen based on a number of factors including your research questions / hypothesis, the duration, budget, and location of the project and the scope and utility of the expected results.

There are many different types of methods, and you will need to choose the ones which best suits you. These methods can be qualitative, quantitative or you can use mixed methods i.e. both quantitative and qualitative methods within the same project. You may want to use a key informant. You can choose to do a cross sectional survey, a case-control study, a prospective or retrospective cohort study or an ecological study. You can use an experimental or a quasi-experimental design. If qualitative methods are determined to be your best choice, you may select in-depth interviews of individuals or groups using structured, semi-structured or open-ended questions, focus group discussions, case studies / ethnography, life histories, participant or non-participant observation.

Along with choosing your preferred research method, you will need to identify your target population and an appropriate sample. Size of sample, recruitment procedures, selection requirements, inducements for participation, and promises to be made should be elaborated. If a written description or invitation will be made in recruiting subjects (such as a cover letter), a copy should accompany the protocol. A draft copy is acceptable. Also, indicate the legal status of the population, e.g., are minors, pregnant women, mentally retarded or mentally disabled individuals involved? Your chosen method will enable you to collect the data, which you need to answer your question. You may need to design and submit study tools if required, which can include questionnaires etc.

A conceptual framework presenting the overall research rationale and questions graphically would be highly recommended.

v. Timeline

You will need to specify the schedule that you plan to use for the activities for your project, starting from the planning phase and ending with dissemination of the results of your study. You can use a full scale GANTT chart or you can simply list the sequence of events within each step of your methodology and assign an estimated duration for each of them in chronological order.

vi. Data Analysis

You will need to give details of your plan to analyze the data you collect in your project. Your plan should include the methods and the techniques and software that you will use to analyze your data. You will need to keep in mind the validity and reliability of your results. Will you be able to answer your research question(s)

or prove/disprove your hypothesis (es)? How will you report this? What is the significance of your results? A comprehensive explanation of how you plan to analyze your data is a critical part of your research proposal. It is through the appropriate analysis of the data collected that results will be obtained and it is in this way that you will answer the question you have asked.

vii. Method of dissemination

Indicate the methods that you expect to use for publication and dissemination of the results so that your research project is as useful as possible.

C. Ethical considerations

The confidentiality of the information that will be provided, treatment of study participants, obtaining informed consent from the participants and addressing the risks and benefits of the project all need to be addressed when considering the ethical dimensions of your proposed project.

Examples of risk to be include deception, stress, anxiety, other health concerns, the subject's right to privacy, anonymity or confidentiality of information obtained, or any probability that participation in the study might affect the subject's life decisions after the study is over. Also, describe the potential benefits of the project to the subject, to society, and/or to the academic discipline of the investigator. Both practical and conceptual benefits should be included. If no benefit is likely to the volunteer (subject), this should be clearly stated.

If the research in any way involves direct contact with subjects, the subject must provide his or her informed consent to participate. This information may be provided to the subject orally, in writing, or both. The issue of informed consent is particularly important when the subjects are minors or are from groups with limited civil freedom such as prisoners, residents or clients of institutions for the mentally ill and mentally retarded. Special care should be taken to obtain voluntary and fully informed consent in such cases.

When taking informed consent it is important to cover the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, the discomforts and risks, the benefits, any alternative procedures or methods that could be utilized, the duration of the procedures and study, any compensation (if applicable), any physical injury (the subject must be informed of the care that will or will not be provided should an unexpected side effect occur as a result of the study; this applies primarily to clinical research), and whom to call in case of an emergency. The investigator must also offer to answer questions, confirm that participants are free to withdraw from the study at anytime and commit to maintaining the confidentiality of information provided. If possible, the participant should sign the form as should the investigator. The signed Informed Consent Forms must be kept on file by the investigator.

If your proposal is shortlisted by the reviewers, during the finalization of its approval for funding, your

proposal may need to be reviewed more rigorously for ethical soundness by the local Institutional Review Board (IRB) e.g. Aga Khan University, HOPE etc. and IRB of Population Council in New York. If this is the case, the PI will be asked to submit proof of completion of an ethical training course within 3 years of the IRB meeting at which the relevant study is being presented. This certification can be obtained from either the NIH:

<http://clinicalcenter.nih.gov/researchers/training/crt.shtml> or FHI:

<http://www.fhi.org/en/RH/Training/trainmat/ethicscurr/index.htm>

Both of these courses are internet-based, and both institutions provide confirmation certificates, copies of which must be attached to proposal submissions in order for proposals to be approved by the IRB.

D. Budget (in rupees)

A budget is a financial plan of your proposed activities. Its development should be a continuous process and start with proposal writing. However a complete budget is normally not prepared until the final stage of project planning.

Divide the study into clear identifiable phases. Collect information regarding goods and services required in each phase. Identify line items / budget heads and format. Collect information/estimates regarding price of each goods or services required. Reconcile budget with methodology proposed and finally write budget line item justifications.

A budget should be prepared after carefully costing of items like personnel, training, pre-testing, field survey operation (lodging, per diem, transport, communication etc.), data entry, data cleaning, data analysis, meetings, printing, dissemination charges and other charges as per proposed methodology. The research team should be of a reasonable size and the percentage of time of team members devoted to this project should be spelt out.

A good budget matches with methodology proposed in the technical proposal. It should have few, clear and measurable line items. The proportion of direct and indirect/administrative costs should be reasonable. Do not hesitate to use clear annotation where needed.

You should avoid luxuries while costing items and use the most economical approach. Make your plan to achieve maximum utilization of time. Analyze and review the budget from variable and fixed costs category. Focus more on reducing variable costs.

Please also indicate whether you have applied for or are already receiving funding from any other source and whether this project is already underway. If so give details.

Guidelines for Supporting Material

Supporting material that is essential with the proposal includes:

- CV of principal investigator, including other current research activities
 - Name and contact details
 - Educational history in reverse chronological order
 - Work experience in reverse chronological order
 - Skills, highlighting those that are particularly relevant to this project

Organizational profile: Describe briefly your organization and the facilities available to conduct the research.

A small write up explaining the qualifications and role (s) of the co investigator (s), if applicable.

Sample study tools, including questionnaires, cover letters (if applicable)

Soft copy of your proposal

Useful References

When writing your research proposal, below are some useful online resources:

<http://www.popcouncil.org/slr/researchtools.html>

<http://www.popcouncil.org/horizons/horizonsrestools.html>

<http://www.nih.gov>

http://www.emro.who.int/rpc/pdf/healthresearchers_guide.pdf

<http://www.who.int/tdr/topics/social-research/files/guidelines.pdf>

http://www.ssrc.org/fellowships/art_of_writing_proposals.page

http://www.gradschool.purdue.edu/downloads/fund/Dunn_Proposal_Writing_Handout_Fall_2004.ppt

<http://www.utoronto.ca/hswriting/abstract.htm>

<http://www.lc.unsw.edu.au/onlib/ref.html>



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