Zooming in / Zooming Out: Strategies for Research Grant Preparation

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Enhancing Competitiveness of Research Grants –
Social Sciences and Humanities

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Why Zoom?

Double focus:

Zooming out: high-level view

Zooming in: expert / detailed view

Zooming out: High-level view: the larger context

Funding context

- What are the priorities of the funder, and this particular program?

- Are there special initiatives or priorities (SSHRC often has them) that you can speak to in your application?

- Know success rates of various competitions and take them into account: are there undersubscribed programs that your work might address? e. g. Training Partnership Grants

- Is the program to which you are applying a good fit?

- Will the kind of reviewers who will understand your research be on the committee?

Two important funding contexts:

Research data management
Open access

- Both mandated by Tri-Councils

- Librarians are your friends for both

Research Data Management

"Research data are data that are used as primary sources to support technical or scientific enquiry, research, scholarship, or artistic activity, and that are used as evidence in the research process or are commonly accepted in the research community as necessary to validate research findings and results. All other digital and non-digital content have the potential of becoming research data. "
[yes, even the humanities have data!]

You are already required to archive your research data (as of 1990).

○ RDM policy is drafted though implementation date deferred

○ Requires institutional policies for RDM (like Ethics) and requires grants to include methodologies that reflect best practices in research data management

○ Consider RDM in your research plan

○ Librarians know a lot about options

○ Portage Data Management Assistant

portage
Shared stewardship of research data

DMP Assistant is a bilingual tool for preparing data management plans (DMPs). The tool follows best practices in data stewardship and walks researchers step-by-step through key questions about data management.

Open Access

- Part of the terms of all awards: "Grant recipients are required to ensure that any peer-reviewed journal publications arising from Agency-supported research are freely accessible within 12 months of publication."

- Integrate OA publication into your KO/dissemination plan

- You can include OA article publishing charges in your budget

- You can deposit a pre-publication version with your institutional repository

- Library can help with deposit of publications The Atrium and data in the Scholars Portal Dataverse

The broader social and intellectual context

Make the case for relevance and timeliness

- Ask the hard questions

- **Get an external perspective**

  - non-expert

  - non-academics

  - research support staff, grant-writers, external consultants

  - a colleague not in the same field with grant experience

The biggest big picture stuff:

Be clear why it matters and
how it will make a difference

Be memorable

- ○ Titles/acronyms

- ○ Phrasing

- ○ analogies or metaphors

- ○ arresting examples

Humanities challenges

○ Methodology often implicit

○ Impact measured differently – quote reviews, flag landmark publications in the prose of application, & invoke other indicators if citations counts don't mean anything in your field

○ Make student training, mentorship, and publication integral

○ Be clear about deliverables; build in interim deliverables if working towards something major like a book

○ Big picture benefits can be hard to articulate: relevance, timeliness, benefits to Canadians

Sample applications help!

So does peer review.

So can percolation – don't leave until the last minute (said the pot)

Zooming in: on expertise and details

Expertise

- Write for expert reviewers, even though the panel is unlikely to reflect your expertise

- Ensure the lit review is covers all the major relevant contributions, even though it is less formalized as a practice in some humanities fields: they need to be present but can be grouped, mentioned in passing, etc.

- But don't get lost in the weeds: if you demonstrate your suitability for the project, and articulate a clear and feasible plan, the experts will trust you: you can probably say things in less detail than you think

Details

- Attend information sessions. Ask questions. Get samples.

- Write to **all** the criteria. If something seems to be missing, ask.

- Be super clear, concise, and organized in your presentation

  - Sections/headings; judicious use of bolding

  - Avoid the "wall of text" effect

    - Keep paragraphs short and leave white space around them

    - Lists and bullets break up the text and emphasize key points

    - Tables, diagrams, charts, visuals help enliven proposals

    - You can almost certainly cut to make space!

- Zoom in on fatal errors: typos, misspellings, dead web links all undermine credibility

Final thoughts

Grant proposals are a genre. Grant-writing is a craft.

- Get resources

- Learn the genre

- Ask for help and advice

- Draft well in advance

- Make it as easy as possible for assessors

- Get feedback from a range of people

- Revise

- Don't get discouraged. Resubmit if you don't succeed the first time.

  Flukes happen: not getting funded does not mean your work is unfundable.

Thank you and good luck!

Questions?

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