

## Building your Research Proposal

### 1) Introduction to the Research and Scholarly Activity Office –

Roles and Functions of: Grants Facilitators X 2; Ethics Officer

### 2) [Life Cycle of a Grant](#)

<http://www.viu.ca/research/ResourcesForFaculty/GrantApplicationLifecycle.asp>

Display Cycle and brief overview.

Focus this workshop on stages 1 (planning) and 2 (drafting)

### 3) Planning for Writing a Winning Research Proposal

#### a) Choosing the right Funding Agency

NSERC – Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council

[http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/index\\_eng.asp](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/index_eng.asp)

SSHRC – Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/home-accueil-eng.aspx>

CIHR - Canadian Institutes for Health Research

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/193.html>

Communities of Science database

<http://fundingopps.cos.com/>

#### b) Choosing the right Funding program

See handout of upcoming deadlines for Fall 2011

#### c) Understanding the stages of an application

**Notice of Intent** – an administrative tool to help the funding agency to prepare for the full submission i.e. formulating their review committees and evaluators

NSERC Discovery Grants

*To apply for a Discovery Grant, first submit a Notification of Intent to Apply for a Discovery Grant (Form 180) and a list of your research contributions for the last six years.*

**Letter of Intent** – usually competitive for funds to develop the full proposal for submission.

SSHRC – Partnership Grant had a LOI stage that would release \$20,000 to prepare a full proposal

**Development Grants** – usually provide a chance for testing out or developing ideas that would not be fully developed to compete for a full research grant.

SSHRC – Partnership Development and Insight Development both precede a full proposal

**Full Proposal** – the full proposal with all components, including the proposed research description, CV's for all researchers, letters from all partners, quotes for equipment etc.

4) Preparing to Draft a Proposal

- a) Get clear on the guidelines and components of the grant
- b) Sketch the sections out in point form and identify existing gaps in material
  - Rationale / Justification: Significance and timeliness (So What? Who Cares? )
  - goals and objectives clearly stated and measurable
  - Conceptual Framework: Lay of the land and assumptions
  - Methodology: How are you going about the research ? What are the guiding methodological theories and practices ? How are you going to evaluate your success ? Do you require ethics clearance ?
- c) Conduct a Literature search
  - are you up to date in the field/ disciplines that your proposal includes ?
  - Have you reviewed recent work by the key players in the field/ discipline ?

5) Building Blocks for the Bibliography

Information management using Ref Works or EndNote or other citation software

6) Building your Budget

- a) Read the [Grantholders Guide](#) to make sure you understand allowable expenditures for this agency and for this particular granting program
  - What is the [history of the allocations](#) for this particular grant or agency ?
  - Key expense on Tri-Council budgets is investment in the next generation of researchers
- b) How much bang/ return is the agency getting for their investment ?
  - restrained budgets for these agencies so want to know they are getting the best value
  - Committee is experienced in reading budgets so don't overestimate or undervalue the work
  - Give the committee something to cut if need be
- c) [Templates](#) and [links to the VIU](#) guidelines and [aids to building the budget](#)
  - Grants Facilitator, Dean or Chair, experienced researchers to review and critique
  - Are there funds that are matching or in-kind contributions ?
  - Has your Dean or Chair committed any contributions on behalf of the institution ?
- d) Budget Justification is an important document
  - make a clear link between the proposed activities and the budget items

- use qualitative and quantitative elements
- everything in moderation rather than extremes (be realistic)

#### 7) Building your Research Team

- Assess the strengths and weaknesses the identify colleagues who can fill these gaps and bolster the strength of the team
- Note the difference between a co-applicant and a collaborator
  - co-applicant contributes substantially to the project, performs specific tasks in the process, may be responsible for some of the budget
  - Collaborator is often an intellectual guide, senior researcher as mentor, or someone who contributes in setting the intellectual direction of the project, cannot be allocated financial resources
- Team management is key to successful team project
  - clearly identify roles and responsibilities of team members
  - encourage team members to update or construct their CV for this granting agency (best to do early on)
  - who leads and how is the management of the team actually going to work ? More allowance for project managers on large team grants
  - Be clear on who is the Primary Investigator and what is their relationship to others on the team – where does the power lie ?

#### 8) Building your Partnerships

- The role of the partners must be clearly defined and understood by all parties. These must be authentic relationships rather than one of convenience. Demonstrate that your relationship with this partner exists beyond the life of the grant or could persist afterwards.
- How does involvement benefit both parties ? What is the “take-home” for the partner ? What is the level of their involvement in designing and implementing the research plan ? Be careful of management by committee (Community Based Research has many tools for this )
- What contributions will your partner make ?
  - Cash contributions: What are the expectations for return or deliverables ?
  - In-kind contributions: Is the contribution authentic and measureable ? Is it intangible (ie introduction to community ? ) How do you [value the in-kind contribution](#) ?
- Statement of support from partners
  - Support letters can take a long time to obtain (is this their first partnership with you or ongoing ? )
  - the Statement of Support must contain specifics such as how the partner is linked to the research project, what is the state of that relationship (duration, integration), what are the expectations of the parties, what are the contributions that they will make.

- templates and examples of partnership letters of support are available from RSAO

9) Building your Proposal

a) Open or refresh [your account](#) with the granting agency

- Fill in the blanks section

- text-based descriptions: have a prescribed length; include key phrases and elements that you identify from your discipline, from the granting agency mandate, and from the actual granting program description. Usually uploaded to the your account as part of the on line section

b) Cadillac version vs. Volkswagon version

c) Tone of the proposal

- be sure of yourself but not over confident or forceful

- be truthful about your capacity and offer solutions or justification for these

- weakness in publication record – fill in with co-applicants; bolster your research record by carefully choosing key journals for fewer publications

- heavy teaching load – teaching intensive undergraduate university

- Define the research project within the frame of your ongoing research program; How does this fit into the bigger picture of your research career ?

- you are on a journey, this is where you are at, wouldn't they like to come along ?

d) Use the power of peer-review early in the process

- Pass the proposal (outline or draft) around amongst your colleagues. Form a community of practice for this kind of exchange and critical assessment to increase your success in both receiving grant funds and in publishing/ presenting.

## Building your Research Curriculum Vitae

- 1) Set up an applicants account with the agency you are applying to
- 2) Generally speaking, there is an [on-line component](#) and documents to be uploaded
- 3) Follow the instructions given for each section exactly.
- 4) The CV is where you are able to demonstrate your capacity to lead and conduct the proposed research project. This is your place to demonstrate rigor and expertise.
  - a) Be sure to list your experience in conducting research, in leading research, in contributing to academic/scholarly understanding, contributions to training the next generation of researchers
  - b) Demonstrate your capacities in project management
    - is this a team application or for an individual researcher ?
    - Can you set a goal, reach that goal, and evaluate the process and the outcomes ?
    - Can you responsibly manage the fiscal aspect of project management
    - Can you responsibly complete reporting requirements ?
  - c) Demonstrate your contributions to your field or discipline
    - What key publications or presentations have you been responsible for producing ? Have you collaborated/ co-published with key movers in the discipline ?
    - think about forming a Cadillac version of your Contributions to Research and training document, keep it up to date, and then mine it according to the focus you want to take.
- 4) Think about ways in which you can strengthen your research CV as you progress in your career
  - Aim to achieve a few key publications over each year (quality vs quantity)
  - Develop your project management record by starting with a few small [internal grants](#)
  - Arrange to be a co-applicant, co-author, or co-presenter with some mentors