

**Research Proposal: A guide to your first draft**

**Outline of proposed research for funding applications**

Before starting to draft your research proposal, you should have a clear “research question.” This is basically what you intend to research on. It does not need to be the final version, but it does need to contain the main idea (we can edit it later).

**Write your research question (or just an idea…):**

All the following sections are important and need to be present in your proposal.

**1 – Introduction**

* It starts with a strong statement (you need to catch the reviewer’s attention right from the beginning!)
* It contextualizes your Research Question
* Identify gaps in the literature/knowledge.
* Details the research’s contribution to existing knowledge.
* It is around 20-30% of your total proposal.

**You can follow** [**Robert Porter’s**](https://www.msudenver.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CraftingASalesPitchforyourGrantProposal.pdf) **ideas to structure the content:**

Part I: Set the Stage-Lay Out the Problem ("Who Cares"?)

1. Get the reviewer interested at the outset.
2. Identify the importance and stress the need.
3. Summarize the state-of-the-art and its limitations.
4. Describe challenges to solving the problem and potential benefits.

Part II: State the Theme-Your Solution

1. Introduce your concept and establish its credibility.
2. Describe your project's fundamental rationale.

Part III: Create a Vision ("So What"?)

1. Show how your work will advance the field.
2. Envision the world with the problem solved.

**2 - Objectives**

* Easily identifiable
* They are concise (one sentence per objective)
* They are achievable and realistic.
* They align with the methodology (see above).
* They align with the research question.

Main Objective (this is your research question):

Aim 1:

Aim 2:

Aim 3:

**3 - Hypothesis**

If necessary, based on your research question and background research, develop a clear, testable, and specific hypothesis that provides an explanation for the observed phenomena. Sometimes a hypothesis is not necessary (an exploratory study, for example).

**4 - Methodology**

This section is critical because it describes how the research will be designed, carried out, and analyzed.

* Research design is clear.
* Data collection processes are detailed.
* Data analysis is explained.
* Specific methodology is explained and/or referenced.
* It is a good idea to embed some kind of timeline in the methodology section (e.g., …during Fall 2024 I will be exploring aim 1… I will conduct X experiment during winter 2025… etc)

I advise you to divide your methodology according to your aims (this way, you are making sure you are explaining what you will be doing to achieve those aims)

Main methodology (if applicable – let’s say, you will be using a theoretical framework, a specific technique through all your aims, etc.):

Methodology for Aim 1:

Methodology for Aim 2:

Methodology for Aim 3:

**5 – Feasibility**

If necessary (it usually is!), provide an explanation of why you will be able to carry out the research you are proposing. Think about these questions:

* Do you have a supervisor that will mentor you or have the right connections for you to succeed?
* Does the program you are/will be applying for give you the necessary training?
* Does Concordia/Department/Lab you will be doing the research have the right equipment?
* Do you bring any experience from your past activities that will help with this research?

**6 - Expected Outcome**

* What you hope to achieve through your research (think outside Academia as well). It helps demonstrate the potential value and impact of your research to your audience.
* Contributions to the field are clear.
* Future research directions are stated.
* Benefits to society are clearly explained.
* Proposal finishes STRONG (yes, you will save the world).

**Other important aspects to consider:**

* Cite pertinent literature throughout
* There is a realistic timeline (as I said, it can be embedded in the text, usually methodology section)
* A proposed institution or supervisor is mentioned, and it is relevant.
* References are adequate.
* It is not heavy on jargon.
* It includes or mentions EDI aspects (race, gender or sex considerations, minorities, etc)
* **It follows the competition's guidelines.**