VBRN Grant Writing Workshop

September 30, 2022

Note the following key dates and information on the pitch paper or draft Specific Aims page.

* Friday, September 2: RSVP to your BPI Coordinator along with any contact information for suggested reviewers
* Friday, September 16: Pitch paper due including 2-3 key words for each attendee’s intended research. If available, a working title is highly encouraged. Email these to your BPI Coordinator. This is a mandatory requirement to participate in the grant writing workshop.
* Friday, September 30: Grant Writing Workshop

###### Details on the Pitch Paper (draft Specific Aims page)

Faculty submit a NIH-style proposal to apply for VBRN funding. Because our network is comprised of primarily undergraduate institutions, VBRN encourages faculty to submit AREA R15 grants for extramural funding. As such, the NIH AREA R15 review criteria are used in the VBRN review process and for the pitch papers.

For the pitch paper, faculty are asked to include at a minimum Specific Aims of the proposed research (one-page total). Optionally and additionally, faculty may include draft Significance and Innovation components of an AREA R15 application (two-pages total, including the Specific Aims page).

VBRN’s goal is to recruit outside reviewers to participate in the small group breakouts. If you have any suggested reviewers you would like to recommend, please share their contact information when you email your RSVP to your BPI Coordinator. VBRN will then reach out to any suggested reviewers.

**The Specific Aims page:**

The Specific Aims page is particularly critical as your “calling card” to your readers. During a Study Section, only the three reviewers will read your full application, but most panelists will only see the Specific Aims page. Hence, your Specific Aims page is critical for selling your application to the whole panel. There is a formal structure to a Specific Aims page. It starts with an introductory paragraph that serves several key functions including introduction of the main scientific question, and statement of the central hypothesis that your work will test. Then, you write a short paragraph for each of the 2-4 principal objectives (Aims) of the study. Each Aim should include the premise behind the Aim, a description of how the Aim will be achieved, and what the likely impact of successful completion of the Aim will be to the field at large. Some PIs conclude their Specific Aims page with a brief impact statement describing how completion of the research will positively impact on the NIH Mission. A good Specific Aims page convinces the reader of the importance of your question, the logical strength of your central hypothesis, and the strength of your approach in testing this hypothesis.

For additional resources on writing a Specific Aims page contact VBRN ([vbrn@uvm.edu](mailto:vbrn@uvm.edu)).

**Significance and Innovation components:**

The Significance and Innovation sections function to convince the reader of the overall urgency of your scientific question, and whether or not you have devised a novel and forward-looking approach to test your main questions. Essentially, a well written significance section answers the why of your grant and convinces the reader that the problem needs further research. It should support your premise for the importance of the question and help frame why your hypothesis is reasonable. The Innovation section is an argument for the novelty of your approach. Typically, novelty is expressed in the form of a novel hypothesis, a new scientific approach or technique, and a novel conceptual framework to study and analysis.

For additional resources on writing Significance and Innovation sections contact VBRN ([vbrn@uvm.edu](mailto:vbrn@uvm.edu)).

An excellent guide for writing NIH grant proposals:

Robertson, John D. et al. [The Grant Application Writer’s Workbook: National Institutes of Health Version](https://www.grantcentral.com/workbooks/national-institutes-of-health/). January 2019 edition. Buellton, CA: Grant Writers’ Seminars and Workshops, LLC, 2019. Print.

##### ****NIH Review Criteria include the following components. Consider these in the preparation of your pitch paper.****

##### ****Overall Impact****

Reviewers will provide an overall impact score to reflect their assessment of the likelihood for the project to make useful scientific contributions to the research field(s) involved, to provide research opportunities to undergraduate students by engaging them in primary research activities, and to strengthen the research environment of the institution, in consideration of the following review criteria and additional review criteria (as applicable for the project proposed).

##### ****Significance****

Does the project address an important problem or a barrier to progress in the field? Is the prior research that serves as the key support for the proposed project rigorous? If the aims of the project are achieved, will the data be publishable and useful to the field? If funded, will the AREA grant have a substantial effect on the applicant institution in terms of strengthening the research environment and exposing undergraduate students to research?

##### ****Innovation****

Does the application take advantage of, challenge or build on current research concepts and models or research techniques? Are innovative approaches to engaging undergraduate students in research proposed?

If you have any questions about the workshop, please contact your BPI Coordinator or [vbrn@uvm.edu](mailto:vbrn@uvm.edu).