

WRITING A GRANT PROPOSAL

The goal of a grant proposal is to give an overview of work you intend to undertake on your project within a given time period. You will explain why your project is important and interesting, whether or not you can complete the work proposed in the given time, what contribution the research will make, and perhaps why you have to go to a specific location to perform your research. The proposal poses a question and indicates how you intend to answer it.

A grant proposal consists of the following parts:

1. The premise, which poses the central problem or question of your research. The premise may be indicated in the title you give your research project. It is useful to pose the question in your opening paragraph to “hook” the reader of the proposal, who is looking for reasons to keep on reading as well as reasons to reject the project.
2. The scholarly context of your research. How does your research fit into the current state of the field? Are you adding and interpreting new evidence? Are you following a new approach? Why is your research significant in terms of existing scholarship? You may have to summarize other approaches in order to show your anticipated contribution. Present your work as a contribution to an on-going conversation, not as the rejection of all that has gone before. Be clear about your work’s contribution, but not arrogant.
3. The sources used in your research. What materials are you using? Where are they located? What access to them do you have already? It is good if you can indicate communication with libraries or institutions where you will work, especially if they are abroad. Can you hit the ground running when you get there?
4. The methodology used in your research. How are you analyzing your material? What perspectives are you bringing to it? Is your approach associated with any larger school of analysis?
5. Break down your proposed work into manageable units or preliminary chapters. It may be useful to give each section a title and then summarize its argument and the sources you will use to write that section.
6. A conclusion, in which you summarize your project, the results you hope to obtain, and the possible implications of that work. Remember, the proposal describes work that is not yet undertaken or completed. Final conclusions would be premature and are not expected.

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