

The Research Proposal

What it is. A *research proposal* is a written document that contains a summary of what the researcher intends to do; how, why, where and when it is going to be done; the financial requirement of the project; and the proponent/s' capability.

A research proposal is prepared in applying for funding. It is also a communication tool enabling applicants to express the needs of their local community, the value of the proposed services, and the expertise and capability of the applicant agency to the funding agency/institution.

The individual who prepares the proposal is called the *proponent* or *grant writer*. The institution, government agency or corporate resources to which the proposal is submitted is called the funding agency/institution.

What are its basic components. A research proposal whether submitted to the University or outside funding agencies usually consists of the major parts such as:

1. Statement of the Problem and Objectives- identification of the problems that needs to be answered and a specification of what the study would like to achieve. It should be accompanied by a background of the problem and the rationale or justification for the study.
2. Review of Literature - a brief summary of the theories and past studies related to the research problem.
3. Conceptual/Theoretical Framework - definition of terms and/or variables according to the theory on which the study is anchored, and the relationship between these variables.
4. Methodology - discussion of the design, sampling, procedures, tools/instruments and method for analysis that are necessary to accomplish the objectives.
5. Work Plan - an approximate schedule of the required research activities. This is conveniently presented using a Gantt chart (see Appendix B).
6. Financial/Budget Plan - itemization of expected/estimated expenses to be incurred during the conduct of the research.
7. Researcher(s) Background - a curriculum vitae of the proponent(s) to include present position, educational background, researches, publications and other pertinent information.

Depending on the project, additional information may be included, as follows:

- A description of how the research findings will be disseminated
- An outline of the team members' responsibilities
- Capacity development
- Other information required by the funding agency/institution

What are its functions? Although the main use of preparing a proposal is to secure for a grant or funding, it also functions as a material that will:

- convince people of the value of or needs for research on specific or integrated discipline(s)
- explain and justify the project being proposed
- provide a holistic view of the research work to be done
- guide the conduct of the research
- serve as tool for planning

Who are the readers of the proposal? The readers of research proposals include the students up to the approval officers. Depending on how useful the proposal is to the reader, the following may be the people who look at your research proposal:

- Approval Officers
- Review Panels
- Reviewers
- Specialists
- Generalists
- Researchers
- Students

In general, reviewers are more likely to be experts.

What makes a good research proposal? Basically, a well-thought research proposal considers the following requirements:

- Has a clearly defined research problem
- Describes appropriate literature as background of the problem
- Uses other sources to identify or support the problem
- Has clearly specified research objectives
- Has clearly stated conceptual/theoretical framework and assumptions:
 1. Appropriate design and methodology
 2. Promotion of further research
 3. Pioneering/pilot study
 4. Necessary resources available
 5. Provision for results' use and dissemination

What are avoided in writing a research proposal? Researchers must bear in mind some “don'ts” in developing a research proposal. These are the following:

1. *Research Content*
 - Too ambitious research

- No literature review
- Literature review copied
- Poor structure and language use
- No integration of theory in literature review
- No theoretical foundation
- No reference or bibliography
- Inadequate consideration of impact assessment

2. Methodology

- Weak research design
- Unclear and inappropriate research methods
- Unrealistic time frame

3. Budget Estimation

- Budget not linked to methodology
- Unrealistic costing
- Inflated budgeting

What funding agencies generally look for in a research proposal?

- Clear objectives/research plan
- Novelty and innovation
- Capability of research team
- Market / benefits