



Bar-Ilan  
University

# Bar-Ilan University

**Research Authority**

Office of the Vice-President  
for Research

# WRITE RIGHT: A Strategy for Writing Successful Research Grants

Dear BIU Researcher:

The staff of the Research Authority presents this guide to help you improve your grant writing skills, with the ultimate goal of helping you win grants. The competitive world of grant funding today demands that your proposal be written with the highest quality and as professionally as possible. Using the ISF application as a model, we offer here suggestions & advice based on our dozens of years in the field, consultations with BIU researchers and evaluators, and a few written sources.

Furthermore, we all know that research grant writing is a complex process. This process often confounds us, demands of us the ability to think (and often logically), exposes our shortcomings, opens us up to “peer-reviewed” criticism, and sometimes surprises us, especially when we win the grant.

The one message we wish to leave you with is that we are here to help you navigate ALL phases of this process. For a list of who we are, you'll find our contact information on the last slide here.

בהצלחה רבה ובשיתוף פעולה פורה!

ד"ר אלי אבן וצוות רשות המחקר

## What makes a “good” research grant proposal?

A “good” research grant proposal will demonstrate (among other qualities):

- An excellent concept. Reviewer: “I wish I thought of that idea.”
- Compelling significance.
- Solid hypotheses, sound rationale, & logical experimental design.
- The ability to advance knowledge within the field or across other fields.
- The research team’s skills set, institutional resources, and partner collaboration to perform the work w/i the project period & proposed budget.
- The data – results - prove the hypotheses.
- Clear, concise, logical, & persuasive writing.

## A few points to remember

- Prepare & apply early. At BIU, the months of July, August, September, & October are devoted to research grant writing.
- Follow the proposal guidelines exactly.
- Design a realistic & focused research plan that convinces the reader that your project will make a difference & is worth funding.
- Follow the proposal guidelines exactly. (We repeated this tip because it merits repeating; we don't repeat what doesn't merit repeating – which of course, is another point to remember.)
- Consult with colleagues who have (successful) experiences in writing grants.

## ISF Research Program

- Abstract.
- Scientific Background.
- Research Objectives & Expected Significance.
- Detailed Description of the Proposed Research.
  - Working Hypothesis.
  - Experimental Design & Methods.
  - Preliminary Results.
  - Facilities & resources available to implement the research.
  - Expected Results.
  - Expected Pitfalls.
- See <http://www.isf.org.il/downloads/Applications/Guidelines.pdf> p. 8-9/2016

# Abstract

- Often the reviewer's first & last impression of you & your work. Make your message count! Write clearly, directly, and forcefully.
- Describe your project's:
  - Over-arching goal. "The goal of this study is to..."
  - Specific aims.
  - Experimental design & methods.
  - SIGNIFICANCE & rationale.
  - Collaboration with other scientists, if relevant.

# Scientific Background

In this section:

- Describe the background & rationale of the project.
- Describe what characteristics distinguish your project from other work on the same topic. What niche (gaps) are you filling?
- Provide a literature review – a focused survey of preliminary research that forms the basis for your project. Demonstrate that you know your field, & who's doing what in it.



## Research Objectives & Expected Significance

- “Convince readers that something is genuinely at stake in the inquiry” (Przeworski and Salomon , 1995). 1
- Define objectives which are clear, specific, & achievable.
- Describe the importance of your hypothesis.
- State how your research advances your field & how your research “makes a difference.”
- Document how your methods & results relate to your research objectives and questions.



# Detailed Description of the Proposed Research

(1 of 2)

- Justify your hypothesis & experimental (or theoretical) design.
- For each specific aim: state how the rationale relates to the hypothesis; justify why your method is the “best” approach to achieve the aim; demonstrate the potential innovative outcomes, describe the potential pitfalls and alternative solutions.
- Preliminary results: demonstrate your previous research output & show how your previous methods relate to the proposed work; provide sufficient detailed data which will help promote reviewers’ confidence in your project management abilities.

# Detailed Description of the Proposed Research

(2 of 2)

- Describe the resources, staffing, collaborations that will enable you to succeed.
- Tell how the research will make an improvement over existing work.
- Document how your project will sustain itself post-funding.
- State expected results – but, only the “positive” outcomes.
- Describe expected pitfalls and how thought-out alternative approaches will overcome potential problems. Failing to mention pitfalls can decrease the reviewer’s confidence in both your grasp of your topic & your project management skills.

## Sources Consulted

1. Pzreworski, Adam and Salomon, Frank, *The Art of Writing Proposals* (Social Science Research Council, 1995 rev., 1988).  
[http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new\\_publication\\_3/%7B7a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf](http://www.ssrc.org/workspace/images/crm/new_publication_3/%7B7a9cb4f4-815f-de11-bd80-001cc477ec70%7D.pdf)

National Science Foundation, A Guide for Proposal Writing,  
<http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/2004/nsf04016/>

Common Mistakes in NIH Applications

[http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/grantwriting\\_mistakes.htm](http://www.ninds.nih.gov/funding/grantwriting_mistakes.htm)

## Famous almost last words...

Remember that research grant writing is a collaborative process. We repeat what we said at the outset. We're here to help you!

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