Developing the Concept and Ideas for grant proposal writing

Professor Friday Okonofua
Research Grant Writing proposal Writing Workshop – University of Medical Sciences, August 22-24, 2016
The Multiple Roles of Tertiary Education Staff

• Service Provider
• Teacher – role model, and mentor
• Researcher
• Member of an Academic network
• A visionary for Social Change
The typical Nigerian Academic

Service Provider 45%
Teacher/Role Model/Trainer 40%
Researcher 5%
Academic Networking 5%
Change Advocate 5%
Academics in other climes

Service Provider 20%
Teacher/Role Model/Trainer 20%
Researcher 30%
Academic Networking 20%
Change Advocate 10%
Benefits of Research & Interventions

• Individual

• Institutional

• Community/National
Individual Benefits of Research & project interventions

- Personal Advancement
- Local/International recognition/networking – e.g. Google scholar, etc.
- Personal satisfaction knowing that one is contributing to advancement of knowledge and to social change
- Could be rewarding in several other ways - expected financial reward should never be a motivation for health research or program development.
Institutional Benefits of Research & Project Interventions

• One of the criteria for ranking Universities across the world is the number and quality of articles published from the institutions that appear in high impact journals
• Another criterion is the extent to which institutions contribute to the development of their communities
• Sci-val is a system whereby the number and quality of publications are compared within and between institutions
• The low ranking of Nigerian Universities in global ranking of Universities is in part due to low quantity and quality of articles – the fact that articles are not published in high-impact journals.
Community Benefits of Research & Interventions

• Research can contribute to identifying solutions to priority community/national problems

• The focus of research should always be tailored to solving unsolved issues and not to re-inventing the wheel – providing solutions that can help to contribute to nation’s development

• Nigeria has some of the poorest health indicators in the world – the need for priority health research is more urgent now than ever before.
Challenges facing essential research in Nigeria

- Inadequate health research training
- Poor infrastructure/lack of local enabling factors
- Lack of institutional, and national funding for research – no research budgets at State or federal levels for health research
- The inability to conceive high flying novel ideas for health research grant funding
- Lack of international grant writing culture
Developing Ideas for Grant-writing

• Having an important idea is the most important secret behind ability to win an international research grant – it’s the central tendency and locus of successful grant application

• The second secret is providing evidence that you or the team can carry out the project, or that you have a track record in implementing similar project activities

• To “seal up the deal” for the grant, the proposal must be well and succinctly written in plain and unambiguous language.
How to obtain ideas for research grants

• Being top-notch in your discipline through detailed reading, service delivery and scholarship
• Reading and learning the types of research and research grants that have been received by others in your discipline
• Through participation in conferences and networking activities
• Working with a mentor or a senior academic in your discipline
Characteristics of Ideas that are fundable

• Ideas should be novel, innovative, fresh – and should bring new thoughts into ways to address a problem

• Should not be repetitive – unless you can provide evidence that such ideas having worked in other places is relevant to solving the immediate problems of the targeted community

• The ideas would be more likely to be funded if they are “action-oriented”.
Characteristics of Fundable ideas

- The idea must be simple and “do-able”
- It should be technically, culturally and ethically feasible
- It should be conceived within a reasonable budget and one that is within the limits of the funding agency
- It should be replicable, and expandable
- It should be scalable or at least designed in such a way that it can be scaled up for larger societal impact at a later stage
Ideas that win international Research Grants

• Must be relevant to international frameworks and definitions of a development challenge
• Must synchronise with the mission and vision of the funding agency
• Should ideally focus on issues not addressed by national governments, and that can contribute to reducing the global burden of disease
• Issues related to social justice, human rights, poverty alleviation, gender and the promotion of social equality are also priorities for international funding
What to do with fundable Research Ideas

• Write down the idea in few simple words
• Discuss with colleagues, especially “progressive” peers and seniors in your discipline to further refine the idea
• Read more about the idea and find out how others have addressed the problem in this or other countries
• Identify possible funding sources
• Develop a concept paper to funding agencies or respond to call for concept papers or proposals by funding agencies
Concept Papers and Research Funding

- A concept paper will help to harmonise and synthesize the idea
- It’s the first entry point to funding
- It should be short and succinct, and it should focus on the main purpose and key methods and outcomes of the project
- It should not be more than 5 pages long
- Never write a full proposal, until you have submitted a concept paper to a funding agency and they have invited you to develop a full proposal
Sections of a Concept Paper

- Project title
- Need – Project Justification
- Goal and Objectives
- Methodology
- Resources and Personnel Available
- Budget
- Conclusion
Conclusions

• “Ideas”, also called “innovations” are the most important part of a medical research proposal that can guarantee funding

• Often embedded in the first part, the introduction of the proposal, it is often written in the form of a justification for the funding being requested

• A concept paper will first introduce the idea to a funding agency who will then decide whether or not to fund the idea.

• My experience is that lack of ideas is the reason for poor funding of health research, not necessarily the lack of funds
I thank you all for listening!