

INFOSHEET

Preparing Grant Applications for Government Support

Typically, government funding is a popular way of gaining support for research in Canada. However, this process is not without challenge and there needs to be a great deal of skill, strategy and effort to sift through complicated guidelines and write a compelling argument for funding. On one hand, for government grant competitions, a previous relationship with the agency is not a requirement. Other aspects of a professional identity are assessed though, such as the publication record, award history and overall research team. On the other hand, applicants need a great deal of human contact in order to secure internal, government funds or a spot on the bidder's list. Developing relationships with funders is generally a good step in order to understand the strategic vision of the government department and how your project fits that direction. What may help is to learn of the different type of funding opportunities in the government so that you can apply for the best grant possible for your research project. When funding is received, remember to practice good stewardship so that additional grants can be awarded in the future (Wason, 2004). As is the case with industry, tough economic times can lead to a reduction in available funds for government. Applicants will need to be creative in their approach to save costs and boost outputs during these downturns (Karsh & Fox, 2009).

Getting Started

- Look at all levels of government for funds, such as local, provincial and federal funding (Wason, 2004).
- Take the time to read the grant guidelines and demonstrate that you have read them when writing your applications and/or liaising with program officers (Karsh & Fox, 2009).
- Show underlying support for an existing program; Draw connections to programs being funded to show investment in the broader topic; and that your project will serve as a helpful complement to the larger program (Karsh & Fox, 2009).
- If you apply for pilot funding, make sure you articulate future plans to apply for larger grants to support the work.
- Ask colleagues or co-applicants for help in preparing and/or reviewing the application, especially those peers with successful experience in acquiring government grants.
- If a program is to be created out of the grant, consider charging the participants dues, fees or in-kind donations to help offset costs (Karsh & Fox, 2009).
- Frame the proposal as completing work for the government. Show how there is a policy in place but little work is being done on the topic. Reference needs assessments, program evaluations reports, strategic plans, emails with government leaders, or other examples to illustrate a connection to policy.
- Emphasize the collaborative nature of your project with non-profits, other government departments, industry and so forth in order to demonstrate a multi-stakeholder approach to the research project (Karsh & Fox, 2009). What makes this collaboration stronger is if there are in-kind and/or cash contributions to the project from the partners.
- Program officers often encourage applicants to give them a call if any questions come up during the proposal writing stage (Karsh & Fox, 2009).

Please contact the Office of Research Services if you would support and assistance with your government-funded grant applications.

References

Karsh, E. & Fox, A.S. (2009). *The only grant-writing book you'll ever need* (rev. ed). New York, NY: Basic Books.

Wason, S. (2004). *Grant writing handbook*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

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