Tip Sheet: HHS Faculty Research Grant Applications

These recommendations were developed based on feedback from the HHS Research Advisory Committee who review these grant applications. They are not intended to be exhaustive, but applicants may find the information helpful in preparing a strong application.

1. **Follow the instructions.** Use the required headings in the order they are presented. Make sure each section includes the required elements.
2. **Make sure the scope of the proposed work is realistic** given the proposed timeline and available resources. A well-articulated, focused project is often reviewed more favorably than a project that appears too ambitious or contains more components than can be reasonably described in 4 pages or completed in 1.5 years.
3. **The specific aims should be clear, defined, and precise.**
4. **The literature review should be brief** and clearly map onto the aims/research questions.
5. **Various components of the application must align.** For example, the aims, hypotheses, and methods should map onto one another (e.g., measures for constructs that are not key variables or covariates should not be included). Likewise, the timeline, budget, and methods section should align (e.g., number of participants, when different aspects of the work will occur).
6. **Be sure the design and language to describe the design match the aims.** Feasibility studies are allowed, and investigators should not use strong outcome language if it is not appropriate at the current stage. In other words, do not attempt to force a proposed project to seem to be something it is not.
7. **Be sure data collection and analysis methods, whether quantitative or qualitative, are described in sufficient detail** for reviewers to assess the rigor and the extent to which they map onto aims/hypotheses and appropriately use the collected data to meet the study goal(s).
8. **In multiple PI proposals,** the unique role/contribution/responsibilities of each person must be specified. It is important that additional PIs have a substantial role in the project to avoid the perception that the second PI is included primarily so the project will be eligible for the highest level of funding.
9. **Quality of writing is critical.** Great ideas do not shine if not described clearly. Applications with typos, grammatical errors, or poor organization are difficult to read and review. Effective strategies to enhance writing quality include multiple drafts informed by self-editing and peer review/proof reading by someone else. This requires advanced planning.
10. **Use writing/formatting techniques that highlight key aspects of the study** and draw reviewers’ attention to needed information, so they do not have to search for it. Good organization, appropriate subheadings, underlining or bolding key text can all be effective in this regard.
11. **Utilize UNCG and HHS Office of Research resources.** Be sure to participate in workshops and programs to improve and strengthen the grant application for this and other grant opportunities and view prior successful examples.
12. **Provide a clear plan for how the proposed project will contribute to the PI’s efforts to secure external funding.** Because the funding is designed to support projects with promise for external funding, it is important that the proposal describe specific plans to use results of the project to support the PI’s efforts to secure additional funding.