

Summary Page of the Research Proposal

This is the "seduction" page, in which you generate credibility (or not). If you write this page well, then the reviewer is on your side. If you write this page poorly, the reviewer is already alienated, your chances of ranking highly will be eroded, and you will be at a huge disadvantage before you start.

ALL reviewers on the panel will receive and read this – only **two** read the whole proposal. So it needs to be self-contained.

The objectives of this summary page are to:

- *Generate interest.* Get the reviewer interested in the research question.
- *Demonstrate importance.* Convince the reviewer of the importance of your work.
- *Give concise Specific Aims and an overview of each part of the Research Plan.* Present a lucid, precise overview of the Research Plan that is well founded both on your experience and on that of the literature. In basic biomedical and clinical science, indicate that you know what the expected results are (and that you have a 'Plan B' if needed-but Plan B shouldn't be given much space, only recognition). In social science and humanities research, you will want to point out how and why your project will complement previous research, rather than simply building on the existing literature.
- *Develop a timeframe.* Outline your timelines at the end of the section of the Research Plan that discusses each Specific Aim. Only a few words are needed.

The layout of Summary Page.

Setting the stage (about 1/3 of the Summary Page).

Give a few introductory sentences that set the general (biological/health/social) stage, and then the research stage. The level here should be comparable to a "News and Views" in Nature.

For example:

- *"The development of the brain is one of the most complex biological processes known. Each neuron in the brain contacts about 1,000 other neurons, but the molecular mechanisms by which axon guidance and synapse formation are regulated are poorly understood. Nevertheless, a number of inherited disorders have been shown to be associated with defective axon guidance."*

Next, present the General Objective or Overall Hypothesis and Specific Aims of your research proposal. In general, you will want to have only three to four Specific Aims.

- *"The General Objective of our research is to identify critical regulators of..."*
- *"To attain this objective, we have three Specific Aims:..." State them now.*

Proposed research (about 2/3 of the Summary Page).

A commonly ignored but essential component is to state **why** you are undertaking a particular experiment:

- *"To identify molecular regulators of axonal guidance, we will..."* or
- *"To establish what family members think about genetic testing, we will..."*

Then, state **why** you are using a specific strategy:

- *"Our approach will be to identify homologues of CUB domain proteins expressed in the developing brain, since proteins of this class have been shown to..."* or
- *"The research is designed to produce replicable empirical data about the social ramifications of genetic testing."*

Significance of the work (a short paragraph).

It is imperative to make your case well. For example:

- *"This work will enhance your understanding of the biology of... and to provide a foundation for elucidating [disease category or health services/population health issue]."*