



Tips for Submitting a Successful MDA Research Grant or Development Grant Proposal

Relevance, Significance, Innovation:

- Relevance: Describe how the proposed work supports MDA's mission and covered diseases.
- Significance:
 - Emphasize how this work may one day impact patients with NMD, including drug development or standards of care. Does the work address basic biology, target identification, target validation, or preclinical drug testing?
 - Strong preference is given to projects with foreseeable clinical relevance.
- Innovation: Explain the novelty of the proposed work. How does it compare to prior research done by you or others? Will the approach ask a question not be asked by others?

Feasibility:

- Is the work technically feasible?
- Is the proposed timeline feasible?

Expertise:

- Demonstrate that you have experience with the experimental methods proposed.
- Demonstrate that you have the appropriate collaborations and/or consultants in place. If you are new to the disease field in which your grant is focused, consider adding a collaborator with experience.

Hypothesis:

- Provide clear hypotheses and specific aims (not to exceed four aims). This is particularly important for grants directed at defining the role of a "new" gene/protein, where often proposals list a series of studies to define a role without stating a hypothesis or putative relevance.
- Remain focused on a central question and avoid being overly ambitious.

Design Pitfalls:

- Consider alternative aims/experiments in case the aim is not successful.
- Avoid aims which build upon a presumed outcome from a prior aim.

Preliminary Data:

- Hypothesis and proposed experimental plan should be supported by preliminary data.
- Present only high-quality and convincing preliminary data.
- Preliminary data should be concise and directly relevant to the specific aims.
- If you have received prior MDA support, clearly outline the outcome of that work (i.e., results and publications). Although these are not renewal grants, MDA would like to know that prior investment was used wisely. If the new proposal is related, describe how the new proposal builds on prior MDA-funded research.

Experimental Design:

- When necessary, include power analysis for the outcome parameter(s) to be used.
- When a proposal describes multiple animal studies, it is helpful to have a table that summarizes the number of animals to be used. Ensure that the total animal numbers "add up."

Grantsmanship:

- Follow the instructions.
- Please note both the submission deadline **date AND time**. (Log on to the proposalCENTRAL application web site to confirm the deadline date and time, shown in red letters in the header of every application section. The deadline time is U.S. Eastern Time.)
- DON'T wait to submit your application until the last minute. Modifications and corrections will not be accepted after the deadline.
- Provide sufficient context and clarity so that the background and proposed work are accessible to a broad audience of biologists.
- Use space judiciously. Carefully address the question, rationale, proposed experiments, and potential impact for MDA.
- A table of abbreviations early in the application is helpful.
- Do a thorough literature search and include some polemics in your justification. This will convey confidence and enthusiasm for the project.
- Address head-on any information in the literature which contradicts your hypothesis and defend your rationale.
- Embed the figures in the text if possible, so that reviewers don't have to flip back and forth between figures and text. Embedded figures should large enough to be legible.
- Proofread your application.

Development Grants:

- DGs are distinct from traditional postdoctoral fellowships. The reviewers will be looking for "high achievers" who have contributed significantly to their field, and a research proposal that has the potential to propel the applicant into an independent position.
- Proposals should not be a copy of the mentor's funded MDA or other grant.
- Ensure that you provide a clear plan for your transition into independence within the Applicant Statement section. This is weighed heavily during review. This plan should outline the steps you will take to transition to independence as well as a rough timeline for the transition.

Resubmission:

- Persistence pays! If you are not funded the first two rounds, address ALL of the concerns and resubmit.