



## CAME Voice/Voix

### **Writing an effective proposal for a scholarly medical education study**

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Developing a proposal for a research or innovation project in medical education project can seem daunting, not least because it means subjecting your work to peer review, scrutiny and criticism by (amongst others) funders and Research Ethics Boards (REBs). Nonetheless, good research proposals codify and make explicit the intended body of work, and as such it can help the researcher, their team, and make their plans explicit to others. Proposals can also guide others in thinking about scholarly work, in particular by role modeling good research practices for learners at all stages and levels. A good proposal is not just a matter of project coordination, it can be a critical step in ensuring the rigour and viability of a study, and it is a critical step in obtaining the necessary permissions to undertake this work and then publish it. After all, scholarly studies are unlikely to be published or properly disseminated without evidence of scrutiny by REBs. I would like to highlight two recently published resources that can help the novice get through the quagmire of developing proposals.

The first is the AMEE Guide by Blanco et al. (2016) that focuses on writing a research grant. The article detangles the mysteries of getting funding and particularly the intricacies of finding funding. It also looks at the rhetoric and differences between writing a proposal and writing a research manuscript, carefully profiling the components of a grant proposal. It poses a series of questions to be addressed in each part of the proposal. The article also deals with the knotty problems of getting the proposal out of the institution including considerations of internal review processes which require time, budgetary considerations (including overhead that goes to the institution), and the way funds are likely to be dispersed should the proposal be successful. Finally, given that many proposals do not get funded, it cautions the reader not to give up if their proposal is not initially successful. Applicants are encouraged to carefully read the reviews and consider options for revision and submission to the same or another funding agency.

The second resource is a series of podcasts that we used in a 'flipped' classroom approach at the Cumming School of Medicine's course, Scholarship in Health Education Research and Innovation. This course was designed as a primer to help novices conceptualize the process of developing a proposal, drawing heavily on CAME's Scholarship and Innovation in Medical Education course. Through three evening workshops, participants were taken through the mechanics of defining problems, developing robust questions, undertaking literature searches, selecting a methodology, and choosing methods of inquiry. The course also covered research ethics, dissemination, and follow-up with new studies and new projects. Based on contributions from Rachel Ellaway, Elizabeth Oddone Paolucci, Maria Palacios-Mackay, Nishan Sharma, and Jocelyn Lockyer, these podcasts have been published on YouTube for anyone to use.

See: Blanco MA, Gruppen LD, Artino AR Jr, Uijtdehaage S, Szauter K, Durning SJ. How to write an educational research grant: AMEE Guide No. 101. *Medical Teacher*. 2016;38(2):113-22.

See: Office of Health and Medical Education Scholarship. Scholarship in Health Education Research and Innovation (SHERI) Course, University of Calgary, October 2016,

<http://cumming.ucalgary.ca/ohmes/events/sheri-workshop/sheri-sessions-0>