

Tip Sheet – Scholarship Writing – General Tips

1. **Start early.** Allow plenty of time for writing, peer review and rewriting.
2. **Remember that scholarship writing is NOT the same as academic writing.** Scholarship Writing is:
 - a. Future oriented: it describes work that you wish to do
 - b. Persuasive: you must “Sell” the reviewer
 - c. Personal: you need to convey your excitement about the project
 - d. Concise: you need to say what you want to say within limited space
 - e. Accessible: you need to write the application for a broad audience – avoid jargon and acronyms
3. **What makes a competitive proposal?**
 - a. It is *significant* – an important area of research
 - b. It is *original*
 - c. It will make a *significant contribution* to the field
 - d. You have the necessary *knowledge and experience* in the discipline
 - e. You have the necessary *experience in the methodology* that you are using
 - f. You have a *succinct, logical and focused project plan*
 - g. You have proposed a *realistic amount of work*
 - h. You have provided *sufficient detail*
 - i. The research is *cost effective*
4. **Assume an uninformed but intelligent reviewer (not necessarily in your field of study)**
 - a. Use clear, accessible language
 - b. Stick with direct statements and active voice (see “Active Verbs for Grant Writing”.)
 - c. Avoid insider jargon and acronyms. If you must use them - explain each one.
5. **Read the description of the funding opportunity** carefully to ensure that your research fits within the parameters of the opportunity and the funding agency.
6. **Follow application instructions exactly!**
 - a. Print out or keep handy a copy of the application instructions so that you can follow them.
 - b. Do not go beyond the page limits, but do use all of the space you are given
 - c. Use **correct font** – SSHRC generally stipulates Times New Roman 12 point
 - d. Use **correct margins** – SSHRC generally stipulates ¾ inch or 1.87 cm- top, bottom, sides
 - e. Use **correct spacing** – SSHRC generally stipulates 1 line (not double-spaced, not 0.9 spacing)
7. **Pay attention to the review criteria**
 - a. Reviewers will use the criteria to “score” your proposal
 - b. Read the evaluation criteria carefully; reference/paraphrase them or, if appropriate, use them as headings in the project description
 - c. Ensure that you address all of the criteria – not just the ones you are comfortable with
 - d. general evaluation criteria for most competitions:
 - originality, significance and expected contribution to knowledge;
 - appropriateness of the literature review;
 - appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework;
 - appropriateness of the methods/approach;
 - potential for the project results to have influence and impact within and/or beyond the social sciences and humanities research community.
 - probability that the objectives will be met within the timeline proposed;
 - quality, quantity and significance of past experience and published and/or creative outputs of the applicant relative to academic level (year of masters, doctoral);
 - evidence of other knowledge mobilization activities (e.g., films, performances, commissioned reports, knowledge syntheses, experience in collaboration/other

interactions with stakeholders, contributions to public debate and media), and of impacts on professional practice, social services and policies, etc.;

- potential of the applicant to make future contributions.

8. Peer review (and other reviews)

- Ask your supervisor and colleagues for a constructive review, for comments and suggestions. At least one reviewer should be qualified to critique the proposal content.
- Ask others not familiar with your research (spouse, mother, room-mate etc) to read it and provide suggestions (do they understand it?)
- Use a proofreader - an eagle eye perfectionist who reads for form, not content; zero tolerance – no error is too small to correct; will find inconsistencies in format as well as typos, misspellings, grammar, etc.

9. Other Tips

- Don't be shy about your talents or accomplishments – advocate for yourself and your research; Convince the reviewers that you are a good bet to get the research done
- Make sure you have a “*catchy*” *beginning* – what is the problem and how are you “going to fix it”? Use a relevant statistic or some other method to emphasize the importance.
- Make sure you have a *solid final statement* –how will your research contribute.
- Use *white space, headers, paragraph breaks, bold/italics/underline* – make it easy to read
- Replace words that appear “tentative” with words that show “confidence” (“I may” with “I will”)
- Write for the reviewers. Your application should be clear, to the point and enjoyable to read. Make the reviewer want to read it...

10. Look at Successful Applications. Learn from others. Examine successful scholarship applications in your area.

11. When a section of the application requires you to **input information into a box, check to ensure that all of the text is included** – that the application form hasn't truncated your text.

12. **The sections of the application must all complement each other.** Although the description of your proposed research is crucial, the other sections are also important. The CV needs to show your ability to do the research. If there is space and it is allowed, make sure you include experiences as a research assistant (and the skills you gained); presentations outside of academia (if relevant), etc.

13. Ensure that **your referees have all the information that they need to write an exceptional reference.** Provide them with:

- Your CV
- Your draft proposal
- Your transcript(s)
- Other information that might help them write the reference letter.

14. To summarize – **Describe; Define; Clarify; Justify** in all aspects of the scholarship application.