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## Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

### Strategies for Writing the Significance Section of an NIH proposal

#### What is the goal of the Significance section and why it is important to write this well?

- The Significance section tells reviewers the expected impact of the proposed work and its relevance to the mission of the funding agency.
- It is one of the two sections of a grant that is most frequently criticized in the summary statement (the other is the Approach section).

#### Suggested information to include in the Significance section of typical NIH research grants

The Significance section is often an expanded version of the first paragraph of the Specific Aims page. Using subsections to break down the major points makes it easier for reviewers to find the relevant information. For most proposals, we recommend including subsections that address the following:

- the **big-picture problem** the proposal addresses
- the **premise** for the proposed work and assessment of the **rigor of this prior work**
- the **expected outcomes** and how they will advance the field or scientific knowledge

#### Thoughts on describing rigor of prior research

Include conclusions from the literature and your preliminary data that are directly relevant to your proposal and discuss any weaknesses with these conclusions. This does not necessarily mean criticizing the work of others.

- Provide an objective analysis to determine whether the prior work was transparent (e.g., do they report blinding, use of power analysis, relevant controls).
- Include limitations that were due to lack of better reagents or technologies (e.g., use of certain animal model/reagent/technique, small sample size, analysis of only males or females).
- Point out weaknesses/limitations that will be addressed in the proposal but leave details as to how these will be overcome for the Approach section.

#### Other considerations

- Get input from colleagues/mentors/program officers – do they think the explanation of significance is convincing?
- Keep it short, 1-1.5 pages is usually sufficient.
- We recommend including up to 2 figures that most strongly support the premise for the project (typically 1-2 data figures or an overall schematic figure).
- Some funding opportunities specify additional/different requirements for the Significance section. For these types of proposals it can be helpful to identify the review criteria in the FOA and to use headers based on these criteria. This will ensure all points are addressed and easily found.

#### Resource

[Strategies for Addressing Scientific Premise and Rigor](#) from successful proposals.

### Upcoming Opportunities

#### UI-ISU Climate Change and Sustainability Innovation Labs (sponsored by the OVPR)

Network with faculty from the UI and ISU campuses to share ideas and establish interdisciplinary research teams that address climate change and/or sustainability challenges. All sessions from 9:30-11:00am:

February 23 | Network and Ideate

March 2 | Network and refine ideas

March 9 | Network, refine ideas, and pitch ideas

[More information and to register](#)

#### Broader Impacts/Research Impacts Seminars

(sponsored by the OVPR)

The Training Team from the NSF-supported Advancing Research Impact in Society (ARIS) organization will conduct interactive virtual workshops in Spring 2022 for NSF CAREER eligible faculty. All sessions from 9:00–11:00 am.

February 25

March 11

March 25

April 8

[More information and to register](#)

#### Research Communications Master Class (hosted by the OVPR).

Presented by Melissa Marshall, in the form of three virtual workshops this spring. Participants are not required to attend all sessions.

March 29 | 5:00–6:30pm

Tell a Clear Technical Story

April 5 | 6:00–7:30pm

Transforming Slide Design

April 12 | 5:00–6:30pm

Short Storytelling: Elevator Pitch

[Register](#)

#### NIH Administrative Supplements to Support Diversity Mentorship

Qualified investigators can submit proposals for a new NIH administrative supplement that will extend the existing awards of scientists who have demonstrated a commitment to exceptional training and mentorship, especially to individuals from groups identified as underrepresented in the biomedical sciences.

[More information](#)

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