

Subject: SERCC Newsletter

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From: Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

To: Widmayer, Heather A



Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

Writing a "Relevance to Military Health Statement" for CDMRP Funding Opportunities

The Congressionally Directed Medical Research Program (CDMRP) is supported by the Department of Defense (DOD) and offers funding opportunities for 35+ different medical research programs, covering over 90 research topics. The CDMRP strives to transform health care for military Service Members and the American public through high-risk, high-gain, and innovative research that other federal agencies might not consider funding.

As part of the proposal submission, some CDMRP research programs require an attachment called "Relevance to Military Health Statement," which explains how the proposed project is relevant to the health care needs of Service Members, their Families, and/or Veterans.

Here are some tips for writing this statement:

- 1. Read the program announcement and application instructions.**

This is a good idea for any grant proposal, but it is especially important for the "Relevance to Military Health Statement" because the instructions for writing it vary by CDMRP research program, and the instructions change each year. Even if a PI plans to submit a proposal for the same funding opportunity as they did the previous fiscal year, the instructions and/or Military Health

Relevance Focus Areas could be different the next fiscal year.

In addition, the page limit, required content, and file naming convention for the statement may vary from one funding opportunity to another. For example, although the statement is typically one page, some funding opportunities request additional information, increasing the page limit to two or three pages. Therefore, we recommend that you carefully read the most recent program announcement and application instructions before starting to write.

2. Determine what content is required.

Generally, the content of the “Relevance to Military Health Statement” explains how the proposed research will support mission readiness and recovery on the battlefield; how it will advance knowledge and treatment for a particular disease, injury, or condition; how it will have an impact on active Service Members, Veterans, and other military beneficiaries, such as Family members; and how military or Veteran populations or datasets will be used, as appropriate to the proposed research.

These and other specific content requirements are clearly outlined in the program announcement, so be sure to read them carefully. When you start writing the statement, it might be helpful to copy and paste the list of content requirements into your document, to serve as an outline of the topics that will need to be addressed.

3. Use headings to structure the statement.

To make it easy for reviewers to find the information they need to evaluate the “Relevance to Military Health Statement,” we recommend using headings and subheadings as guideposts throughout the document. The wording of these headings can be based on the content requirements provided in the program announcement.

For example, the [FY24 Health Services Research Award announcement](#) for the Traumatic Brain Injury and Psychological Health Research Program includes the following three (of four) bullet points as part of the requirements for a two-page statement. After each bullet point below, we have suggested possible headings and subheadings that could be used.

- *“If applicable, clearly articulate how the proposed research is likely to enhance readiness and recovery on the battlefield, during training, or in resource-limited environments....”*

Suggested heading and subheadings:

- **Mission readiness and recovery**
 - Overarching challenges

- Gaps in [prevention/treatment] of [disease/research-related injury]
- Gaps in quality of life after [diagnosis of disease/research-related injury]
- *“If applicable, describe how the study team composition can provide military-relevant subject matter expertise to the proposed research.”*

Suggested heading:

- **Study team has military expertise**
- *“Provide a description of how the knowledge, information, products, or technologies gained from the research could be implemented in a dual-use capacity to benefit the civilian population and address a military need, as appropriate.”*

Suggested heading:

- **Benefits to Service Members and the civilian population**

4. Write for your audience.

The CDMRP has a two-tiered review process consisting of a peer review and a programmatic review.

Discipline-specific peer review panels include research scientists; clinicians; consumers representing advocacy, support, or outreach organizations; members of the military; and other specialists as applicable to the award mechanism and program area. A consumer could be a patient, survivor, family member, and/or caregiver of an individual living with a disease, injury, or condition that is funded by a program. All peer review panel members evaluate and score the scientific and technical merit of each proposal.

Programmatic review panels are composed of a multidisciplinary group of research scientists, clinicians, and consumers, who compare applications from multiple research areas to evaluate how well the proposed research meets program missions and goals. Evaluation criteria for peer and programmatic reviews are published in the program announcement.

The “Relevance to Military Health Statement” is reviewed by the programmatic panel. Since it is likely that some members of this panel will not be subject matter experts, be sure to write this statement for a general audience. Keep the language simple, limit the number of acronyms, and clearly explain terms and concepts that might be new to some reviewers.

5. Include short statements about military health relevance throughout the grant.

Be sure to address military health relevance in all relevant application sections to convey that you are truly thinking about the military impact of the proposed project. Some CDMRP grant applications require statements of military relevance in multiple sections. For example, in grant applications for the FY24 Peer Reviewed Cancer Research Program (PRCRP), the PI is asked to clearly articulate how the proposed study relates to FY24 PRCRP Military Health Focus Areas in the Project Narrative, the Lay Abstract, and other files. (Military Health Focus Areas are listed in the program announcement.)

6. Ask for feedback from non-experts.

As with any grant proposal that you write, it is helpful to get feedback from one or two non-experts who could identify wording that might be confusing. Consider sharing your “Relevance to Military Health Statement” with someone outside your research group—a colleague, friend, or family member. This will help you pinpoint trouble spots in the document and help you communicate your proposed research more effectively.

For additional information about writing this and other components of a CDMRP grant proposal:

- Visit the [CDMRP website](#) and use their [searchable database of funded awards](#) and [research resources](#).
- View sample CDMRP proposals in the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) [Proposal Resource Library](#) (navigate to Sample Proposals and Supporting Documents > Department of Defense Proposals > Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)).
- Contact the [SERCC scientific editing team](#).

Heather Widmayer and the SERCC Team

*Thank you to **Kristina Thiel, PhD**, Assistant Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, University of Iowa Health Care, who suggested the topic for this newsletter. Her team recently received a Translational Team Science Award from the CDMRP Peer-Reviewed Cancer Research Program.*

If you have a suggestion for a future newsletter topic, [we'd love to hear about it.](#)

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Announcements

[Learn from Successful Examples: Proposal Resource Library](#)

Are you curious about how to structure your proposal to a particular funding agency? Check out the Resource Library to see examples of successful proposals to various funding agencies and for inspiration while drafting your proposal.

[Increase Grant Competitiveness through an External Review](#)

The Research Development Office (RDO) assists University of Iowa faculty with preparing more ambitious, collaborative, and successful proposals, including by facilitating external reviews for proposals to external funding agencies. External review of proposals prior to submission will provide critical feedback to strengthen the proposal and improve the overall likelihood of success.

Upcoming Opportunities

[Have a question about writing grants or research articles?](#)

[Contact us](#) and we will answer it in a future newsletter.

Ask the Editor: SERCC Virtual Office Hours

2nd and 4th Friday of every month | Next session August 9 | 9:30–10:30 a.m. | [Zoom](#)

The SERCC hosts virtual office hours twice a month. If you have a question related to writing a grant, manuscript, or other scientific document, “stop by” to talk with a scientific editor. We are also happy to answer any questions you have regarding our services. Open to all faculty, staff, fellows, postdocs, and students.

[More information](#) | [Link to event](#)

Speaking for Success: Strategies for Effective Presentations

Friday, August 16 | 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. | [University Capitol Centre](#)

This course examines effective delivery techniques that engage expert, peer, and lay audiences alike. It provides practical information on how to deliver powerful oral presentations for a variety of audiences and during informal conversations with colleagues and potential collaborators. It also includes a discussion about voice, inflection, body language, techniques to stimulate interest and involvement, and strategies to help facilitate audience recall of your message. You will also learn how to prepare for a presentation, manage anxiety, and design and use visual aids effectively.

[More information](#) | [Register](#)

Maximizing Pivot to Find Funding and Collaborators

August 19 | 10:00–11:00 a.m. | [Zoom](#)

Do you want to optimize your time spent searching for funding opportunities or potential project collaborators? The RDO hosts webinars that demonstrate how Pivot can save you time and effort in identifying the right funding opportunities for your research program and identifying collaborators with the relevant expertise.

[Additional information](#) | [Register](#)

Write Winning Grant Proposals

Phase I Seminar: September 20 | 8:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. | Iowa Memorial Union

Phase II Intensive Workshop: January 7–8, 2025

The RDO, in the Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR), is pleased to partner with Dr. John Robertson from Grant Writers' Seminars & Workshops to conduct the “Write Winning Grant Proposals” seminar and intensive workshop. The seminar is a prerequisite to the Phase II workshop. Appropriate for faculty members, postdoctoral researchers, and administrative staff with exposure to grant writing.

[More information and link to registration](#)

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