



ARMC Proposal Abstracts Best Practices

- Required by almost all funding agencies, in various formats
- Immediately shows topic, approach, relevance
- Helps program officer determine selection of reviewers
- Forms first impression of full proposal for reviewers
- Entered into permanent electronic database
- Becomes primary identifier of project
- Used by many agencies as press release, notice to politicians, or other publicity purposes
- Can also be called
- Project Summary
 - Executive Summary
 - Technical Abstract
 - Project Overview

Abstract Audience and Readers

- Agency staff
- Highly technical, scientific peers
- Non-technical but professional peers
- Generalists/lay readers
- Public advisory council/board of directors
- Congress: staff, elected officials
- Local politicians

- Special interest groups
- General public

Components of Proposal Abstracts

- One or two sentences each on:
 - Subject: What is the project about?
 - Purpose and significance:
 - What is to be accomplished?
 - Why is this work important
 - to funder
 - to discipline
 - to society
- Activities:
 - What will be done?
 - With what methods?
- Location of project, if relevant or requested
 - City, state, region
- Target population and location of project, if relevant
 - Demographics of participants, including beneficiaries and/or subjects
- Expected outcomes:
 - What results will be produced?
 - How will results advance knowledge/state of the art in the discipline or the profession?
 - What will be long-term benefits?

Agency Differences in Abstracts

- National Science Foundation
- National Institutes of Health
- U.S. Department of Education

- U.S. Department of Defense: DARPA
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Private foundations
 - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - The Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation

Agency Differences: National Science Foundation

- Called a “Proposal Summary, not an Abstract”
 - Three distinct sections, separately uploaded:
 - Overview:
 - Summarizes research topic, plan and approach
 - Intellectual Merit:
 - How the project contributes to scientific knowledge
 - Broader Impact:
 - How the project will benefit society

Agency Differences: National Institutes of Health

- Called a “Proposal Summary/Abstract,” suitable for dissemination to the public (in laymen’s language)
- Maximum 30 lines of succinct text in PDF format, avoiding the use of first person
- Requirements include
 - Broad, long-term objectives and specific aims
 - Brief description of research design/methods
 - Target population, if applicable
 - Health-relatedness, significance, and value of the research
 - Relevance to the specific mission of the agency

Agency Differences: U.S. Department of Education

- U.S. Department of Education

- Requirements and format vary widely by ED program
- Usually one page that may contain:
- institutional information, contact person, title
 - objectives
 - budget summary
 - project outcomes
 - institutional overview
 - number/demographics of targeted population
 - competitive priorities
- May also require a Logic Model

Agency Differences: DARPA and National Endowment for the Humanities

- U.S. Department of Defense: DARPA Young Faculty Award
 - “Write a 1-page executive summary.”
- National Endowment for the Humanities Individual Fellowship: 1000 characters
 - “Provide a description of your project for a nonspecialist audience.”
 - “State the importance of the proposed work to larger issues in the humanities.

Agency Differences: Environmental Protection Agency

- EPA STAR Program: Project Summary (1 page)
 - Definition of technical challenge to sustainability
 - Development of innovative design approach with technical merit to address challenge
 - Discussion of how challenge and proposed design relate to sustainability, including People, Prosperity, and the Planet (P3)

- Description of strategy for measuring results, evaluation and demonstration
- Description of how P3 concepts will be used as an educational tool at the applicant institution
- Supplemental key words

Agency Differences: Private Foundations

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
 - “In no more than 4000 characters (roughly 650 words), please summarize your proposed work in the text box below.”
- Camille and Henry Dreyfus Special Grant Program in the Chemical Sciences
 - “A one-page equivalent of an executive summary that answers the following”:
 - What problem does the proposal address?
 - Why is it important?
 - How will what is proposed address the issue?