BECOMING SUCCESSFUL IN SECURING ARC GRANTS

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30 March 2011

DECRA: 85K salary and 40K project
Perfect scheme for those starting out: you can develop your research agenda, identity, and signature.

What do I need to do? The Big Picture and Proposal Tips

The Big Picture

1. Excellent writing. “It sparkles.”
   - Make it flow, readable, a joy to read
   - Make every word count
   - Simplify complex ideas
   - Please visual appearance
   - Know your grammar and punctuation
   - Proof read: no errors of any kind and consistent use of style rules

   How to get there: Learn to write effectively, know all the rules of good writing and when to break them, revise over and over.

2. Good idea: originality and clarity. “I hadn’t thought of that before.”

   Quoting from Guetzkow et al. (2004), originality means original approach, original theory, topic, method, or data. Researcher has intellectual authenticity.

   Positives: adventurous, ambitious, bold, courageous, curious, independent, intellectually honest, risk-taking, challenging the status quo

   Negatives: conformist, complacent, lazy, parochial, pedestrian, fashionable, trendy, throwing around buzzwords

   How to get there: Reflect on what makes your work and ideas distinctive. What is your contribution to research? What is important to you? What is your scholarly identity? What do you want to be known for?

3. Timing, time, conceptualisation, and critical review.

   Timing. Are you ready? Is this the right time?
   Time. Minimum two to three months from start to finish; the more time, the better.
   Conceptualization. Start early to identify structure, themes, and approach; brainstorm with at least one or two people.
   Critical review. Identify a group of critical readers (at least four or five); finish a final draft one month before the OR internal due date to give to critical readers for review.

   How to get there: Plan ahead, be thick skinned, and resilient.

Proposal Tips

4. Know the genre of a research proposal. This is not a research paper; rather, you are selling yourself as a researcher, an idea that needs to be researched, and an optimal way of carrying out the research.

5. Show the reader what you are going to do. Screen play the research plan/methods section. “I am going to this. Then, I am going to that.” This requires having a realistic and achievable plan.

6. Keep the project realistic. A sound and solid project design is essential. Make sure the project is feasible, doable, and achievable. Do not make promises you cannot deliver.

7. Read successful proposals. Visualise yourself as the researcher when reading successful proposals.

8. See the proposal as a whole package. Maintain a clear and consistent message about yourself and your project across all parts of the proposal.


For the DECRA

Part D  Project Description

(Review Funding Rules, p. 6, for criteria.)

Project Title
Make sure you have a good title.

Project

A. Aims and background
Set up the problem quickly; there’s not much time for a standard literature review; don’t be plodding; rather, use this to show there is a gap in the field and how you will address it.

Next heading level. Blah deh blah

B. Significance and importance
Here’s where you make your sales pitch: show why you and your research is distinctive and important, and what contribution it will make to the field.

C. Research plan
This is a crucial section for demonstrating your ability to design and conceptualise a project. You need to be clear on what exactly you will be doing. Don’t be vague: the reviewer is interested to see the stages and research tasks over time and what you’ll be doing. Use an approach that is original or innovative, compared to other researchers.

D. Research timeline, outcomes, and benefit
This section sketches the outcomes/results and how they will provide benefits to Australia. The section can be tricky if you are doing research with a comparative or international design that does not foreground Australia.

Institutional Support  (two paras)
This is new for the ARC, and many of us are puzzled about what they are looking for. Some standard text has been developed in some areas (e.g., the KCELJAG, School of CCJ, CEPS). This needs to be developed further by the AEL DDR, Centre Directors, and HOSs.

References
10 pt font. No need to have too many; hit the major ones.