EXPERT VOICES
From Faculty Reviewers

Graduate College

ADDRESS THE "SO WHAT" QUESTION FROM YOUR READER

The best rated applications were able to take an important issue in their individual subfield and make a convincing argument for why their study is important more broadly.

Remember, in award competitions reviewers are unlikely to be from your discipline and students need to be able to convince someone unfamiliar with a particular research question of the greater importance beyond just having a gap in the literature.

SEMANTICS AND FRAMING THE IMPORTANCE OF YOUR RESEARCH

I saw quite often that the applicants wrote: 'this will be an important and significant contribution to my field'.

I would suggest (if possible) to write something like: 'the anticipated results of this project will be submitted for a possible publication to Journal of X and Y, which is one of the mainstream journals in the field widely used by researchers from around the world, including researchers from Universities of A, B and C'.

CONTENT AND FORMATTING SPECIFICS

Ensure the content aligns. Include a clear purpose statement and then have everything link to that statement.

All items that are measured in the model need to link to the intro and purpose statement.

Include a graphic, table, or figure. This is especially helpful for reviewers outside of the student's area of study.

AVOID JARGON

Write so that anybody can read and understand it. Exclude jargon or field-specific acronyms or language.

READ CAREFULLY

It is easy to deduct points when the guidelines are not followed. With many strong applications, this could easily be the difference that leads to a successful award.

PROOFREAD. EDIT. SHARE. REPEAT

Your proposal must be free of typos, editing remarks, corrupted graphics, and other mistakes.

COMPLIANCE

Know the regulations relevant to Human Subjects, Radiation, Biosafety and Animal Care. Know the Export Control guidelines.

wmich.edu/research/compliance

BUDGET

Make a reasonable, detailed budget plan and align it well with the goals and objectives of the proposal.

QUALITATIVE STUDIES

Provide enough detail on data analysis.

Provide a contingency plan for recruitment and/or include an example of previous success with recruitment.