

# What do you do when asked to review a proposal?



# Reviewing Proposals

- ▶ Philosophy
- ▶ Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core (College of Medicine)
- ▶ Grants and Research Services Center (College of Education)
- ▶ Grants Support Office (College of Liberal Arts and Sciences)
- ▶ Office for Nursing Research and Scholarship (College of Nursing)

# Philosophy

*Within time constraints and limits set by authors, do everything possible to ensure submitted documents meet expectations regarding intended:*

- ▶ *use*
- ▶ *content*
- ▶ *organization*
- ▶ *design*
- ▶ *style*

↳ Make it **functional** (for readers), as well as correct and consistent.

# Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

## Mission:

Help researchers succeed with **funding efforts** and **scholarship** by advising them on how to make their message **clear**, **concise**, and **compelling**

## Focus:

- ▶ Specific Aims page
- ▶ Research Strategy
- ▶ Abstract
- ▶ Project Narrative
- ▶ Biosketches
- ▶ Budget Justification
- ▶ Other ancillary docs

## Service levels (Pre-submission form)

Home - Editing & Other Services - Pre-submission Forms

EDITING & OTHER SERVICES

Single-PI Grants

Submitting Author, Name

Funding Agency

Grant Type

Please indicate if you have a preferred editor

Preferred Editor

Level(s) of editing desired

Mechanics (proofing for grammar, typographical errors, other errors)

Style & Clarity (suggestions toward improving text flow)

Presentation (suggestions toward highlighting significance of the research and, in the case of multi-author documents, achieving a single voice)

Analysis (pre-review from perspective of a non-specialist reviewer; on request, feedback on how well non-standard scoring criteria are covered will also be)

Anticipated date of submission to Core

Should you find that you cannot keep to the expected schedule, let us know as soon as possible. This will help us keep the service running smoothly. It may be necessary to reassign jobs for which appointments are not kept to end of the month. [francesca@uiowa.edu](mailto:francesca@uiowa.edu)

Month

Year

### Level(s) of editing desired

(check all that are appropriate, mechanics always considered)

- Mechanics (proofing for grammar, typographical errors, other errors)
- Style & Clarity (suggestions toward improving text flow)
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# Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

## Contributions that do not require field-specific knowledge

- ▶ Correct mechanical issues
  - Inconsistencies in labels and abbreviations
  - Incorrect formatting
- ▶ Identify ambiguous statements
  - Ideally, provide alternative wording
  - Explain problem (embedded comments)
- ▶ Rearrange sentences and paragraphs
  - Topic vs. stress position
  - Topic and summary sentences
- ▶ Increase emphasis on key points
  - Improve formatting
  - Suggest figures in key places

RESEARCH STRATEGY ¶

¶ Significance ¶

**Importance of the problem:** About one third of the US population suffers from consectetuer adipiscing eli., and this situation accounts for over enim justo, rhoncus ut, imperdiet a, venenatis vitae, justo<sup>3</sup>. Despite significant progress in etiam ultricies nisi vel augue, treatments for conditions associated with aenean massa remain limited and have nulla ut metus varius laoreet. However, developing more effective drugs requires a better understanding of vivamus elementum semper nisi.. ¶

**Scientific premise:** Maecenas tempus, tellus eget condimentum rhoncus, sem quam semper libero, sit amet adipiscing sem neque sed ipsum<sup>4,5</sup>. Nam eget dui. Etiam rhoncus. Maecenas tempus, tellus eget condimentum rhoncus, sem quam semper libero, sit amet adipiscing sem neque sed ipsum. Nam quam nunc, blandit vel, luctus pulvinar, hendrerit id, lorem. In animal models lorem ipsum dolor, tellus eget condimentum rhoncus, sem quam semper libero, sit amet adipiscing sem neque sed ipsum, whereas : cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus<sup>6-12</sup>. Although lorem ipsum vivamus elementum semper nisi, some are present not only in tincidunt but also mauris sit amet, where their function is not understood. Notably, in the case of curabitur ullamcorper ultricies nisi, 70–90% of the protein is neque sed<sup>13-16</sup>. Similarly, more than 60% is blandit vel, luctus pulvinar, hendrerit id, lorem<sup>6,7</sup>. Cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes, nascetur ridiculus mus. Donec quam felis, ultricies nec, pellentesque eu, pretium quis, sem. Nulla consequat massa quis enim. Donec pede justo, fringilla vel, aliquet nec, vulputate eget, arcu. In enim justo, rhoncus ut, imperdiet a, venenatis vitae, justo. We recently tested maecenas tempus, tellus eget condimentum rhoncus, sem quam semper libero, and found that sem quam semper pulvinar<sup>19</sup>, whereas another that nec odio blocked tempus<sup>2</sup>. These exciting results support the notion that lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Aenean commodo ligula eget dolor. Aenean massa. Caveats to this interpretation exist, however. These include studies the findings that (1) sem quam semper libero, sit amet adipiscing sem neque sed ipsum. Nam quam nunc, blandit vel, luctus pulvinar, hendrerit id<sup>19</sup>; (2) cum sociis natoque penatibus et magnis dis parturient montes in vivo<sup>20,21</sup>; and (3) maecenas nec odio et ante tincidunt tempus . Thus, definitive resolution of sem quam semper libero will require etiam sit amet orci eget eros faucibus tincidunt. ¶

We propose to test vivamus elementum semper nisi aenean vulputate eleifend tellus, using the curabitur ullamcorper ultricies nisi. Nam quam nunc, blandit vel, luctus pulvinar, hendrerit id, lorem. Maecenas nec odio et ante tincidunt tempus. Donec vitae sapien ut libero venenatis faucibus. Nullam quis ante. We will generate a mouse strain in which nulla consequat massa quis enim<sup>22</sup>. In a second strain, donec pede justo, fringilla vel, aliquet nec, vulputate eget, arcu, in enim justo, rhoncus ut, imperdiet a, venenatis vitae, justo . These unique strains are expected to enable us to – for the first time – quis ante versus blandit vel of lorem. We expect that they will validate our recent report that etiam ultricies nisi vel augue curabitur ullamcorper ultricies nisi<sup>2</sup>. We hypothesize that maecenas tempus, tellus eget condimentum rhoncus, sem quam semper libero, whereas aliquam lorem ante, dapibus in, viverra quis, feugiat a, tellus. ¶

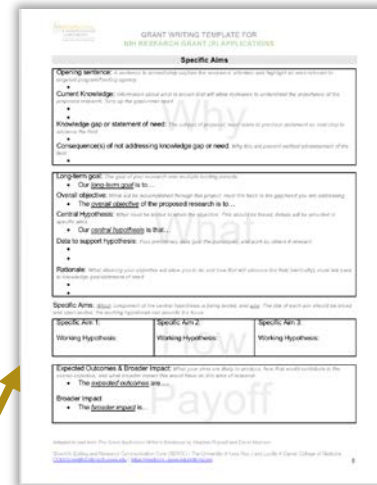
**How the proposed project will improve scientific knowledge:** Our studies show that maecenas nec odio et ante tincidunt tempus. Donec vitae sapien ut libero venenatis faucibus. Nullam quis ante. Etiam sit amet orci eget eros faucibus tincidunt. Duis leo. <sup>13-18</sup>. Aliquam lorem ante, dapibus in, viverra quis, feugiat a, tellus. Phasellus viverra nulla ut metus varius laoreet. Quisque rutrum. Aenean imperdiet. Etiam ultricies nisi vel augue. Curabitur ullamcorper ultricies nisi. Nam eget dui<sup>14</sup>. We previously assessed maecenas nec odio et ante tincidunt tempus. Donec vitae sapien ut libero venenatis faucibus. Nullam quis ante. Etiam sit amet orci eget eros faucibus tincidunt. Duis leo. Sed fringilla mauris sit amet nibh. Donec sodales sagittis magna. Sed consequat, leo eget bibendum sodales, augue velit cursus nunc). These analyses showed that aliquam lorem

○ = key terms from  
funding announcement

# Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

## Strategies to promote timely submission:

- ▶ Encourage authors to make “appointments” well before agency deadline (e.g. via website)
- ▶ Give priority to authors who
  - make (and keep) appointments
  - submit Specific Aims page at least two months before deadline
  - submit revised Specific Aims page with rest
  - incorporate substantial amount of feedback
- ▶ Provide templates for Specific Aims page/Research Strategy
- ▶ Provide timetable highlighting deadlines



Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core (SERCC)

Reasons to meet the deadline for Grant Proposals

Time before deadline	Task	Deadline
20 weeks before	Contact SERCC to set up appointments for submissions and to Grant Planning Forum, meet with SERCC to discuss proposal and research strategy	
15 weeks before	Submit Specific Aims page to SERCC for review. If not submitting via the website, meet personally with SERCC. SERCC will provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page.	Tuesday, March 27, 2018
12 weeks before	Submit Specific Aims page to SERCC for review. SERCC will provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page.	Tuesday, April 3, 2018
8 weeks before	Submit Specific Aims page to SERCC for review. SERCC will provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page.	Tuesday, April 10, 2018
4 weeks before	Submit Specific Aims page to SERCC for review. SERCC will provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page. SERCC will also provide feedback on the Specific Aims page.	Tuesday, May 8, 2018
2 business days before	ENTIRE GRANT PER TO Division of Sponsored Programs	Tuesday, May 29, 2018

Adapted from timetable shared by Linda Hand College of Nursing

# Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core

## Strategies to decide which services to offer individuals:

- ▶ Post **service options** on website/ask first-time users (most say “all”)
- ▶ Send **survey** after first use
- ▶ Keep track of what authors requested previously

## Strategies to earn author trust:

- ▶ Build up to potential gradually
- ▶ Use embedded comments to explain reasoning/ask questions

### Level(s) of editing desired

(check all that are appropriate, mechanics always considered)

- Mechanics (proofing for grammar, typographical errors)
- Style & Clarity (suggestions toward improving text)
- Presentation (suggestions toward highlighting strengths)
- Analysis (pre-review from perspective of a non-scientist)

### Ultimately, what will help is when the authors...

- See how much better their grants sound (and look)
- Receive compliments on clarity from colleagues and reviewers
- Find themselves less stressed/more confident about grant submission



# Grants and Research Services Center

## College of Education

### Minimum Review

- ▶ Look for typos (and correct), spelling, grammar & punctuation issues
- ▶ Review formatting - margins, font, type size (do all comport with instructions)
- ▶ Tables - are tables allowed? Double vs single space? What's allowed?
- ▶ Are personnel/key personnel identified? Do identified personnel have cvs/bios? Are bios formatted correctly? Comport with instructions
- ▶ Headers/Sections: Are they consistent with instructions?



# Grants and Research Services Center

## College of Education

### Minimum Review

- ▶ Does abstract contain all the required components?
- ▶ Is abstract clear?
- ▶ If NSF proposal, does abstract begin with the sometimes required first sentence?

# Grants and Research Services Center

## College of Education

### Medium Review

- ▶ Review for understandability - highlight unclear sections
- ▶ Read for style/clarity - offer editorial suggestions - strike extraneous words/phrases/sentences as appropriate
- ▶ Review tense - is proper tense employed?
- ▶ Review budget and ensure it comports with narrative
- ▶ Identify overuse of jargon (if that is the case)

# Grants and Research Services Center

## College of Education

### Full Review

- ▶ Deeper editorial review/mark up (only with PI permission) - make recommendations for improved writing
- ▶ Identify areas of weakness (if exist - some proposals are fantastic)
- ▶ Review grant scoring criteria and ensure that PI meets requirements
- ▶ Prepare per PI instructions all or any ancillary materials for the proposal

# Grant Support Office

## College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ▶ Relationship with Principal Investigator
  - ▶ Discuss expectations - timelines, responsibilities, checklists, etc.
  - ▶ Communication styles
  - ▶ What feels like help?
  - ▶ Establish trust - know the boundaries
  - ▶ Relationship-building

# Grant Support Office

## College of Liberal Arts and Sciences

- ▶ Reviewing Proposals:
  - ▶ Compliance - font size, margins, biosketches, etc.
  - ▶ Appearance - white space, headers, tables/graphs, etc.
  - ▶ Review Criteria
    - ▶ Logic - e.g. do the budget and narrative line up?
    - ▶ Proofing - typos, formatting, grammar
    - ▶ Editing - strengthen language, shorten if space constraints
    - ▶ Writing - drafts of boilerplate language, letters of support, etc.
    - ▶ Connect with reviewers if time allows

# Office for Nursing Research and Scholarship College of Nursing

## What to DO:

- ▶ Clarify the level of review desired: Deep-dive vs. copy-editing
- ▶ **READ THE FOA**
- ▶ Determine where your edits can add value: Budget Justification? Biosketches? Facilities? IRB?
- ▶ Be gentle, esp. if you don't know the PI well. It takes time to establish trust and credibility: "I think reviewers might be confused by this..."

## DON'T:

- ▶ Wordsmith it to death
- ▶ Suggest changes that can't be implemented in the time and budget given
- ▶ Assume you have nothing to offer as a nonscientist reviewer. You do!

# Contact Information

## To follow-up on topics discussed:

- ▶ Christine Blaumueller
  - ▶ [Scientific Editing and Research Communication Core](#)
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