The Grant Process

Presented by
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Learning Objective:

- To understand the role and processes of Health Research Services in the Faculty of Health Sciences

Topics for Discussion:

- Now that I've written my proposal, what do I do with it?

- They've funded me, how do I get an account?

- Why do applications not get funded?

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FHS Research Volume

- ~ 2700 active research projects

- ~600 new agreements per year

- >1000 new applications per year

- 2016-2017 FHS Research Revenue $133M

Health Research Services

- Supports Faculty of Health Sciences only

- Pre-award Services:
  - Identification of funding opportunities
  - Provision of information sessions
  - Assistance with budget development
  - Review of grant submissions
  - Review for compliance with agency and institutional guidelines
  - Obtaining of institutional signatures

Health Research Services

- Post-Award Services:
  - Budget revisions and amendments
  - Ensures that researchers and the University are protected through funding agreements and compliance with agency and institutional policy
  - Processes account requests

- General Contact Information:
  - HSC 3H9
  - hsresadm@mcmaster.ca
  - x 21027

Health Sciences Finance

- Post-Award Services
  - ➢ Works in conjunction with Departmental Finance to manage the funding over the lifespan of the grant
  - ➢ Provides financial reporting as required by agencies and other sponsors

- General Contact Information:
  - ➢ HSC 3H9
  - ➢ hsresfin@mcmaster.ca
  - ➢ x 20780

I Need Help, FAST!

- Our HRS internal deadlines are generally two weeks prior to the agency deadline

- The more information we have, and the earlier we get it, the better we can help you

- Communication is key

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Who Do I Talk To At HRS?

- CIHR Applications

Lisa Hodge hodgel@mcmaster.ca

Ashley Preston presta2@mcmaster.ca

- Agreements / Contracts

Caroline Woods cwoods@mcmaster.ca

- General Applications

Catherine Gill Pottruff gillc@mcmaster.ca or Serena Jennings sjenn@mcmaster.ca, (Depending on the home department of the PI)

- NIH Applications

Serena Jennings sjenn@mcmaster.ca

Sarah McNiven-Scott

mcnivesb@mcmaster.ca

- Major Projects

Sarah McNiven-Scott

mcnivesb@mcmaster.ca

When in doubt:

hsresadm@mcmaster.ca

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Lifespan of a Grant – Part I

APPLICATION (Pre-Award)

- 3 weeks prior to sponsor deadline
  - PI submits package for Department signatures

- 2 weeks prior to sponsor deadline
  - PI submits package to HRS for institutional review and signatures

- Week of sponsor deadline
  - Submit to agency when ready
  - HRS only submits for you when the agency requires it (ie CIHR)

Submitting an Application to HRS for Review and Institutional Signatures

- The application should be fairly close to final

- Provide all the documents:
  - HRS Application Checklist, signed by PI and Chair
  - Application Form
  - Proposal
  - Budget
  - Budget Justification
  - Signature Pages

- If the application requires signatures, make sure Department sign-off is complete first

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A Couple of Hints About Budgets

- Read the agency guidelines carefully to see what they consider eligible

- Some agencies allow overhead; if they do, make sure that the maximum is included

- Staffing: Use the collective bargaining salary grids and don't forget fringe benefits on top of staff salaries

- Trainee Stipends: Generally fringe benefits are not allowed on Master's/PhD candidate or CIHR PDF stipends

What Does HRS Do With My Application?

- Review thoroughly for content and style, as well as from the institutional point of view, and provide back comments, suggestions and reminders about agency guidelines

- Obtain an institutional signature, usually Dr Jonathan Bramson, FHS Associate Dean - Research

- Enter the proposal into MOSAIC as a draft

What About Trainee Awards?

- Undergraduate studentships and Post Doc fellowships come through HRS

- Graduate scholarships that are stipend only go to the School of Graduate Studies at the application stage

- Graduate scholarships that have a stipend and a research allowance come through HRS at the application stage

My Application Has Been Funded! Now What Happens?

- Operating funds for FHS researchers almost always come through HRS

- Trainees are permitted to hold funding in their own names, if they are the primary applicant

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Lifespan of a Grant - Part II

AWARD (Post-Award)

- Immediately upon award
    - If requested, PI replies with acceptance
    - Many agencies require proof of ethics approvals before they will release funds
    - Contact your Senior Grants Advisor in HRS with the good news

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What Does HRS Need For An Account?

- HRS Account Request form
- Award Letter
- Signed Acceptance, if required by agency
- Final Application/Proposal/Budget
- Revised Budget, if the award amount is different from what you asked for
- Ethics Approvals

A Quick Note About Ethics

- There are several ethics/approval boards here:
  - HIREB, AREB, MREB, Biohazard, Health Physics

- Documents required
  - Original approval
  - Current annual approval

- Biohazard approval is now project-based (BHA)

- Ethics approvals take time

What Does HRS Do With The Award?

- Review it for completeness, ensuring we have all the information we need

- Review any contracts or agreements with the sponsor and obtain institutional sign-off

- Process the account opening request

- Hand it over to Health Sciences Finance to activate the account

- Update accounts as needed – no cost extensions, additional funding etc

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Lifespan of a Grant - Part III

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (Post-Award)

- HSF works with the PI and Department Finance staff to manage the account for the life of the grant
  - ➢ Family Medicine's Research Finance Accountant is Corrina MacDonald cmacdon@mcmaster.ca

- PI is responsible for any required reporting
  - ➢ Progress and Final Narrative Reports
  - ➢ Financial Reports

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Research Agreements and Contracts

- All incoming and outgoing funds that require an agreement between us and another site must be reviewed by the Contracts Officers

- Incoming funds: Request a draft agreement from the source

- Outgoing funds: Agreement is drafted by the Contracts Officer

- All agreements need institutional sign off

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What Doesn't Get Handled by HRS?

- Industry Sponsored Clinical Trials: HHS/SJH
- Clinical Trial Site Agreements: HHS/SJH
- Service Agreements: MILO/Legal Affairs
- Ontario Graduate/Vanier Scholarships: SGS
- NSERC / SSHRC: ROADS
- Education (with no research component): Dept

Why Do Applications Not Get Funded?

- A grant application is a sales document; you need to persuade the reviewers that your idea is worthwhile and deserves funding

- Common Errors

  - Technical
  - Overoptimism
  - Budget

  - Evaluation Plan
  - "So What?"

Technical Errors

ISSUES

- Your proposal doesn't match the agency's interest

- You didn't follow directions

- It's poorly written, crammed together with typos and jargon

AVOID BY

- Research the opportunity before you start

- Double check the eligibility and format guidelines

- Find a proof reader

Overoptimistic Proposal

ISSUES

- Too many objectives to meet in the time or funding available
- Assumption that all experiments will yield expected results
- Overestimation of potential participants
- New and untried procedures

AVOID BY

- Limit objectives to 2-4 max
- Have a backup plan
- Show you have an adequate patient population base
- Pilot studies for feasibility and training

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Budget Woes

ISSUES

- Ask is for too much or too little
- Obvious budget padding
- Inadequate staffing or use of personnel
- US/European vs Canadian funds

AVOID BY

- Be realistic
- Get quotes for services or purchases
- Protocol-driven expenses vs standard of care
- Standard institutional salaries/fringe benefits
- Appropriate use of personnel
- Exchange rate

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Inadequate Evaluation / Training Plans

ISSUES

- Data analysis section is short, vague or unfinished
- Planned tests are inadequate or inappropriate
- Knowledge translation is not mentioned
- Inclusion of trainees is crucial for CIHR and others

AVOID BY

- Consult with a statistician in the planning phase
- Think outside the box for knowledge translation
- Find a way to include HQP where possible, even if it's hiring an undergrad summer student

"So What?"

- The art of grantsmanship is in convincing your reviewers why this particular project is deserving of funding, over all the other ones in the competition

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The Big Picture

- Your reviewers may be in your field but likely are not experts in your specialty
- Tell them why you want to investigate your aims, why it's important and what impact it will have
- Make sure the science is sound, feasible and complete
- Make sure you prove you can get the results in the time and funding allotted

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It's Not The End of The World
If You Aren't Funded (This Time)

- In the last CIHR Project Grant Competition, the Canada-wide success rate was about 15%

- Use the reviewers' comments to improve your next submission

- You will learn something new with every application

"You have to have a thick skin, and remember that it's very uncommon to be successful on a first try for funding; you have to be able to bounce back, take the criticism, implement it and keep trying –

a combination of hard work,

dedication and stubbornness!"

Dr Rich Whitlock

Cardiac Surgeon