

# **Developing the Concept and Ideas for grant proposal writing**

Professor Friday Okonofua  
Research Grant Writing proposal Writing  
Workshop – University of Medical  
Sciences, August 22-24, 2016

# The Multiple Roles of Tertiary Education Staff

- Service Provider
- Teacher – role model, and mentor
- Researcher
- Member of an Academic network
- A visionary for Social Change

# The typical Nigerian Academic

Service Provider	45%
Teacher/Role Model/Trainer	40%
Researcher	5%
Academic Networking	5%
Change Advocate	5%

# Academics in other climes

Service Provider	20%
Teacher/Role Model/Trainer	20%
Researcher	30%
Academic Networking	20%
Change Advocate	10%

# **Benefits of Research & Interventions**

- Individual
- Institutional
- Community/National

# Individual Benefits of Research & project interventions

- Personal Advancement
- Local/International recognition/networking – e.g. Google scholar, etc.
- Personal satisfaction knowing that one is contributing to advancement of knowledge and to social change
- Could be rewarding in several other ways - expected financial reward should never be a motivation for health research or program development.

# **Institutional Benefits of Research & Project Interventions**

- One of the criteria for ranking Universities across the world is the number and quality of articles published from the institutions that appear in high impact journals
- Another criterion is the extent to which institutions contribute to the development of their communities
- Sci-val is a system whereby the number and quality of publications are compared within and between institutions
- The low ranking of Nigerian Universities in global ranking of Universities is in part due to low quantity and quality of articles – the fact that articles are not published in high-impact journals.

# Community Benefits of Research & Interventions

- Research can contribute to identifying solutions to priority community/national problems
- The focus of research should always be tailored to solving unsolved issues and not to re-inventing the wheel – providing solutions that can help to contribute to nation's development
- Nigeria has some of the poorest health indicators in the world – the need for priority health research is more urgent now than ever before.



# Challenges facing essential research in Nigeria

- Inadequate health research training
- Poor infrastructure/lack of local enabling factors
- Lack of institutional, and national funding for research – no research budgets at State or federal levels for health research
- **The inability to conceive high flying novel ideas for health research grant funding**
- Lack of international grant writing culture

# Developing Ideas for Grant-writing

- Having an important idea is the most important secret behind ability to win an international research grant – it's the central tendency and locus of successful grant application
- The second secret is providing evidence that you or the team can carry out the project, or that you have a track record in implementing similar project activities
- To “seal up the deal” for the grant, the proposal must be well and succinctly written in plain and unambiguous language.

# How to obtain ideas for research grants

- Being top-notch in your discipline through detailed reading, service delivery and scholarship
- Reading and learning the types of research and research grants that have been received by others in your discipline
- Through participation in conferences and networking activities
- Working with a mentor or a senior academic in your discipline

# Characteristics of Ideas that are fundable

- Ideas should be novel, innovative, fresh – and should bring new thoughts into ways to address a problem
- Should not be repetitive – unless you can provide evidence that such ideas having worked in other places is relevant to solving the immediate problems of the targeted community
- The ideas would be more likely to be funded if they are “action-oriented”.

# Characteristics of Fundable ideas

- The idea must be simple and “do-able”
- It should be technically, culturally and ethically feasible
- It should be conceived within a reasonable budget and one that is within the limits of the funding agency
- It should be replicable, and expandable
- It should be scalable or at least designed in such a way that it can be scaled up for larger societal impact at a later stage

# **Ideas that win international Research Grants**

- Must be relevant to international frameworks and definitions of a development challenge
- Must synchronise with the mission and vision of the funding agency
- Should ideally focus on issues not addressed by national governments, and that can contribute to reducing the global burden of disease
- Issues related to social justice, human rights, poverty alleviation, gender and the promotion of social equality are also priorities for international funding

# What to do with fundable Research Ideas

- Write down the idea in few simple words
- Discuss with colleagues, especially “progressive” peers and seniors in your discipline to further refine the idea
- Read more about the idea and find out how others have addressed the problem in this or other countries
- Identify possible funding sources
- Develop a concept paper to funding agencies or respond to call for concept papers or proposals by funding agencies

# Concept Papers and Research Funding

- A concept paper will help to harmonise and synthesize the idea
- It's the first entry point to funding
- It should be short and succinct, and it should focus on the main purpose and key methods and outcomes of the project
- It should not be more than 5 pages long
- Never write a full proposal, until you have submitted a concept paper to a funding agency and they have invited you to develop a full proposal



# Sections of a Concept Paper

- Project title
- Need – Project Justification
- Goal and Objectives
- Methodology
- Resources and Personnel Available
- Budget
- Conclusion

# Conclusions

- “Ideas”, also called “innovations” are the most important part of a medical research proposal that can guarantee funding
- Often embedded in the first part, the introduction of the proposal, it is often written in the form of a justification for the funding being requested
- A concept paper will first introduce the idea to a funding agency who will then decide whether or not to fund the idea.
- My experience is that lack of ideas is the reason for poor funding of health research, not necessarily the lack of funds

**I thank you all  
for listening!**