

If you're an inexperienced grant-writer, remember this: *Realistic* and *systematic* often trump *exciting*.

➤ **Don't be overly ambitious**

As a young investigator, you do not need to model your research after the research that came out of the more established lab where you did your fellowship. Remember that NIH study section members want to fund science that is realistic and achievable within the projected budget.

➤ **Don't jump ahead**

You may be tempted to jump ahead to your most exciting specific aim. Better than your aims build upon one another in logical sequence. Here is a typical sequence that works well:

**Aim One** -- Likely to be achieved and informative, but not particularly groundbreaking.

**Aim Two** – Heart of grant. Moves science into new territory.

**Aim Three** – Predicated on first two. Yields most novel information, but also most speculative.

➤ **Do mention backup plans**

Study section members typically skim the first page of a grant, looking for certain magic words such as “alternative approaches” and “potential outcomes” indicating that you have contingency plans if experiments do not proceed as planned.

➤ **Do detail methods**

Unlike more established investigators, first-time grant-writers should present their methods in sufficient detail to prove to study section members that they can actually carry out experimental plans.