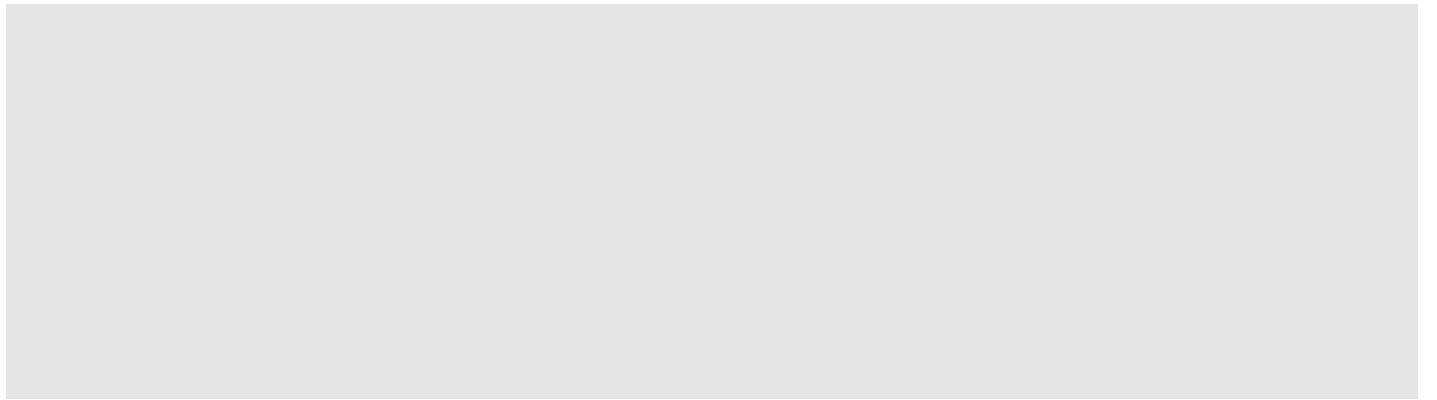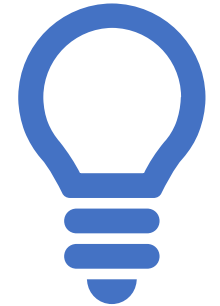# Tips for Preparing Your R Proposal

Julie Christianson, PhD

Lauren Ptomey, PhD

# General Tips for Preparing Your R

When reviewing a grant reviewers ask themselves three important questions.

Your proposal needs to clearly address these.

1) How will the completion of this proposal advance the field?

2) Can the question be answered using the research strategies proposed?

3) Does the investigative team have the experience and expertise to carry out the proposed study?

- Don't assume the reviewer will have any subject matter expertise.

- Drive home the big picture. In every section, remind them of your goals and research questions.

- Include graphics and timetables.
  - Many reviewers pay more attention to the charts, timetables, and graphics than to the written narrative.

- White space is your secret weapon to getting a happier reviewer.

- Double/triple check important wording (hypotheses, specific aims) to ensure that it is consistent.
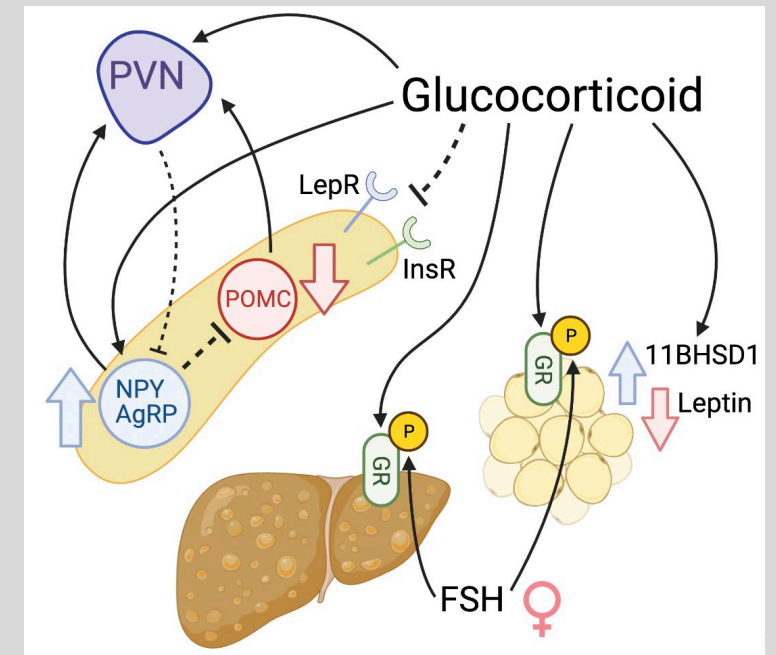
# Pilot Data
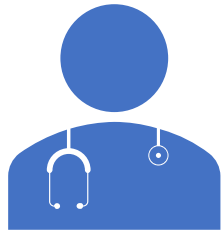
## Clinical

For most R01s pilot data is optional but can be key to success. Don't be afraid to put the time and effort into a pilot as it almost always pays off. Not only you will demonstrate feasibility or initial efficacy of your idea, but you gain important insights that will only strengthen your grant.

## Basic/ Translational

New investigators

- Preliminary data not required (but helps!)
- Need to show feasibility

Established investigators

- Preliminary data are critical
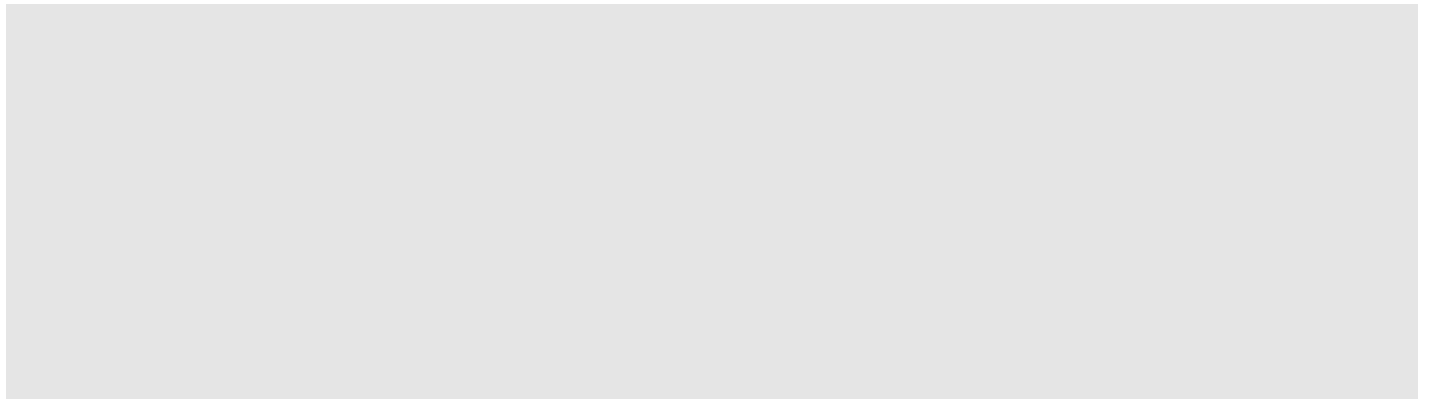- Must support the hypotheses and show feasibility

If you get a not discussed score, do not give up, especially if your significance received moderate to high scores.

Grants can go from not discussed to a fundable score in one resubmission.

**Impact Score:** Not Discussed

**Percentile:**

# Top 6 ways to Impress Reviewers

## Significance

- Provide a summary statement at the end of to summarize the problem, remind reviewers of what you will do in your proposal, and address why and how your proposal will overcome the gaps in the literature.

## Investigators

- Clearly state with examples (publications and grant) that the team has a history of collaboration.

## Innovation

- Generally, show how the work is new and unique and how it will add significantly to the field. It's okay if not everything about your project is innovative highlight the things that are and state what is not.
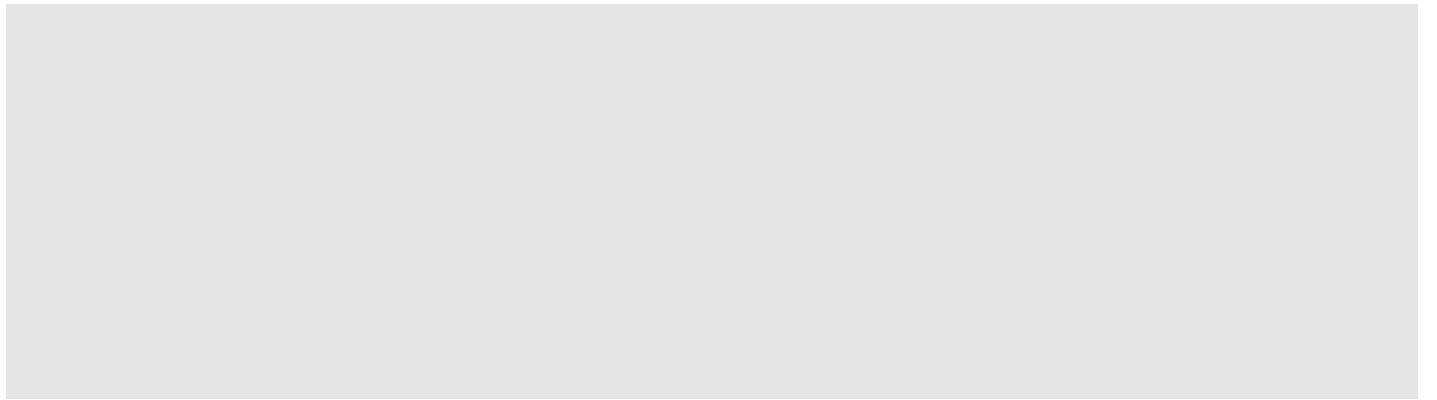
## Approach

- Note any potential problems in the research strategy while convincing the reviewers why that limitation won't impact your overall study goals or what you made the choice to include a certain outcome or intervention component.

- Include a well-developed graphic of working model, with a clear indication of what aspects will be tested

## Environment

- If using institutional cores, include letters of support from the directors outlining what services they are providing.

# Top 6 ways to annoy the R proposal reviewer

## Significance

- (Clinical) Trashing previous interventions or studies (you never know who may be reading your proposal). However, it is okay to mention limitations or gaps in the literature.

- (Basic) Tearing down all other animal models of your disease/disorder. Every model is useful and none are perfect, emphasize what is unique about yours and what insights can be gained, while also acknowledging limitations.

## Investigators

- Not having an investigator with a specific enterprise clearly needed for the proposal.

## Innovation

- Trying to make the proposal sound more innovative than it really is. If you lack innovation just state that and justify why.

## Approach

- Not providing enough detail about the intervention. A reviewer should have enough details to conduct your study after reading the proposal.

- Proposing to look at every possible intervention in every possible model at every possible time point. Put some serious thought into experimental design, be selective and prioritize experiments.

## Environment

- List pages of equipment unnecessary for the proposed trial.