



# Applying with **impact**

## Evidence-based strategies for grant and scholarship success

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You have the idea. You have the clinical experience. But securing funding as a medical radiation practitioner is fiercely competitive – and a strong research concept alone is rarely enough. How a proposal is written, structured and positioned can be just as critical as the science behind it.

### Introduction

Evidence consistently shows that well-structured, persuasive proposals increase the likelihood of funding and support career advancement in academic and clinical research settings (Wisdom et al., 2015; Prentice et al., 2024). Yet proposals from medical radiation practitioners face a distinct set of challenges (Table 1). Technically complex, cross-disciplinary content must be communicated clearly to review panels with diverse expertise, who assess not only scientific merit but also clinical significance, feasibility, clarity and impact (Guthrie et al., 2018).

This article presents five evidence-based strategies to help you write stronger applications and improve your chances of success, whether you are applying for the first time or preparing a resubmission.

### 1. Ensure strategic alignment

Before writing a single word, read the funding guidelines carefully. And then read them again. Aligning your proposal with the funding organisation’s specific grant, mission, priority and evaluation criteria is one of the most powerful things you can do. It immediately communicates relevance and focus to reviewers, and signals that you understand what the funder is trying to achieve (National Science Foundation [NSF], 2024).

Use the funder’s language to address their review criteria directly. Reducing ambiguity is essential. All reviewers work to a specific marking rubric. Your job is to meet those expectations whether you have access to the scoring sheet or not.

Significance and innovation matter equally. Proposals that tackle meaningful gaps in knowledge or practice, offer novel approaches and demonstrate broader societal, policy or educational impact convey that the work creates tangible value beyond academia (NSF, 2024).

Each question in the application has a specific expectation. If you feel that what you have written in one section is being repeated elsewhere, you may have missed what the point of each question

is. Basically, if you feel the need to copy and paste, you have not addressed one of the questions appropriately.

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**Quick check:** Does every section directly respond to the funder’s stated priorities? If not, revise before you submit.

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### 2. Establish evidence and feasibility

Strong proposals are grounded in current evidence. Using up-to-date literature and sound research methodologies to justify your project establishes credibility and reassures reviewers that you are addressing a real, substantiated need, rather than just an interesting hypothesis (Chan & Hart, 2023).

That said, do not dismiss novel or innovative ideas if you feel they address a genuine clinical need. Just make sure you clearly cover their relevance within the application parameters and back them with the best available evidence.

Feasibility is equally important. Clearly defined timelines, achievable deliverables, measurable outcomes and realistic budgets demonstrate that your project can actually succeed. Articulating how you intend to achieve your aims further indicates accountability and a commitment to measurable outcomes and value to the funding body (National Institutes of Health [NIH], 2023; NSF, 2024).

Reviewers are not only assessing the intellectual importance of your work; they are also judging the likelihood of successful implementation. Strong evidence combined with a credible plan reduces perceived risk and increases confidence that resources will be well spent.

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**Remember:** A reviewer who believes in your idea but doubts your plan will not fund you. Make the ‘how’ as compelling as the ‘why’.

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### 3. Demonstrate your capability and team support

Reviewers fund people as much as ideas. Whether you are applying as an individual or as part of a team, the principle is the same: show that the project is in capable hands. Confidence increases when applicants demonstrate relevant expertise, prior



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successes and a complementary, even multidisciplinary, team (NIH, 2023). In medical radiation practice, where projects routinely span clinical, technical and research domains, showcasing the right mix of skills is particularly important.

Highlighting institutional and community support, including access to facilities, mentorship, partnerships or stakeholder endorsements, further strengthens your case by signalling that the project exists within a sustainable, supportive environment (NSF, 2024).

Showing both applicant capability and external support reduces perceived risk and signals that the project has the backing it needs. Applicants who demonstrate capacity at multiple levels (team, institution and community) position themselves as credible, reliable and capable of translating the project into results.

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**Key point:** Whether applying solo or with a team, show you have the capability, the support and the right people around you to make it happen.

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## 4. Enhance reviewer clarity

Even the most compelling project can falter if reviewers cannot easily understand it. Clear, coherent and well-structured writing enables reviewers to quickly grasp the project's aims, objectives and strengths (NIH, 2023).

Where possible, use logical sequencing and adopt the headings of the application itself. Concise language makes complex technical information digestible, especially given that reviewers often assess many proposals under tight time constraints.

Strategic formatting, including executive summaries, tables and figures, helps to guide reviewer attention and reinforces key points (NIH, 2023). Use these tools carefully though. Visual aids should complement the application structure, not distract from it. The goal is to help reviewers navigate your content efficiently and relate it directly back to the application questions, so that your proposal's significance, feasibility and anticipated impact are immediately evident and memorable.

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**Formatting tip:** If a table or figure requires explanation to understand, simplify it. Reviewers should be able to read the key message at a glance.

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## 5. Seek peer feedback and keep refining

Structured peer feedback and continual revision are essential for refining clarity, identifying gaps and strengthening the overall argument (Wei & Liu, 2024). Engaging colleagues early provides opportunities to test how well your proposal communicates ideas across disciplines, uncovering areas of confusion before submission, not during review.

Start drafting well in advance. This allows time for thorough evidence gathering, careful alignment with funding priorities and clear articulation of your aims. It also leaves room for the kind of continual refinement that separates competitive applications from average ones.

One of the most powerful steps you can take is to ask someone outside your immediate field to review the application specifically in the context of "answering the grant or scholarship expectations". An independent reader can quickly identify where your writing assumes too much prior knowledge. This is invisible to you because you know your project so well, but can confuse a reviewer who does not.

Finally, if you are resubmitting, address prior reviewer comments explicitly. Demonstrating responsiveness, adaptability and a commitment to excellence substantially enhances competitiveness and reviewer confidence (NIH, 2023). Seek support and suggestions from previous successful grant or scholarship recipients; their insights can be invaluable.

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**Golden rule:** Draft early, revise often and get an independent reviewer.

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**Table 1: Key challenges in medical radiation grant and scholarship applications**

Challenge	Description
Multidisciplinary complexity	Proposals span clinical, technical and research domains; content must be accessible to reviewers from all backgrounds.
Innovation vs feasibility	Must advance the field while remaining realistic, fundable and grounded in current evidence.
Clinical impact	Must clearly demonstrate improved patient care, diagnosis and outcomes; not just scientific advancement.
Resources and budget	Equipment, data storage or multi-site participation needs require well-justified, realistic budgets.
Regulations and ethics	Patient privacy, safety and ethical considerations must be addressed explicitly and early.



## Conclusion

The most valuable thing you can do before submitting is talk to someone who has been through it. Seek out colleagues who have won funding in your field. Their insights are worth more than any guideline document.

To apply with impact, take care to give reviewers the responses they are looking for, not just what you feel they need to know. Work with the process, not against it.

The science matters. But so does the story you tell around it. Ultimately, a grant or scholarship application is about winning support for your idea. Get that right with clarity, credibility and a proposal that speaks directly to your reviewers, and you give your ideas the best possible chance of reaching your patients and the wider health community.

## References

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