

HOW TO WRITE A PROPOSAL FOR THE HEALTH SYSTEMS TRUST

What is a proposal?

A project proposal is a written document which describes the project you are planning to do. The Health Systems Trust (HST) uses your proposal to decide whether or not to fund your project. Your proposal should therefore try to convince us that your project is worth doing, that you know how to do it, and that you are an appropriate person to be doing this research. You also need to convince us why and how the results will have a beneficial effect on health systems in South Africa.

What things do the Health Systems Trust look for in a project proposal?

The HST is most interested in topics which directly concern the improvement of South Africa's Health System. These may vary from very small projects which consider the services of a single clinic, to very large projects which consider all health services throughout the whole of South Africa.

The HST is also keen to develop the research skills of people interested in health systems research in South Africa. We are therefore particularly keen on those projects which ensure that health systems research skills will develop as a result of the project.

We are also keen that the research HST funds is able to influence health policy and the delivery of health services in South Africa. For this reason, we are most interested in those projects where relevant decision makers/service providers are directly involved in the project.

The format of your proposal

1. You should begin your proposal with a brief *summary* of the whole project. This should be no more than 300 words long.
2. Next you should have an *introduction* which tells us why you chose the topic and why you feel this research needs to be done. You should also tell us how you have involved relevant decision makers, whether at local or national level, in your project. We are keen that these policy makers are genuinely committed to projects to ensure that research turns into 'action' or policy. You should then indicate what is already known about the topic you wish to research. This can be done in two ways. Firstly you should review existing literature concerning your topic. From your literature review you should be able to find out what is already known about topic you want to study, and if the research has been done before in South Africa, or elsewhere. Secondly, you should also have spoken to others in South Africa who have done, or are doing related research. In other words, you should not try to 'reinvent the wheel', but should communicate and 'network' with others in the field. From this you should be able to tell us why you feel it is necessary to conduct the study.

- Your introduction should also clearly state the *aims and objectives* of your research.
 - Your *aim* should be a short single statement which states what your research is trying to achieve
 - Your *objectives* should be a short list of statements which say how you will be able to achieve your overall aim.
3. Next your *methods* should be clearly described. You need to make sure that your methods will be able to achieve your objectives, and that they are achievable and realistic. We will expect you to tell us who or what you intend to study; where and how you will obtain your data, and how will you decide on your sample size. If you have not already done a pilot study, you may include this within your methodology. We will also want you to tell us why you chose this methodology and not other methods. We also want to know how your results will be analyzed.
 4. You will next need to think about the *ethical considerations* of your research. We will want to know if peoples rights or welfare will be affected by your research. If you feel your research may adversely affect them, we will need to know how you plan to safe-guard them. You may need to get approval from an ethics committee. If approval has been applied for, or granted, you should include this documentation with your proposal.
 5. We would also like you to write a clear *work plan* of your project, describing what you are going to do, and when. Try to be realistic, (and allow some time for contingencies) as we will expect you to follow this plan!
 6. We also want you to tell us what the *outcome* of your project will be. We require that all projects produce a report telling us what you did, and what the results were. However, we are also keen that others should learn from your research. We therefore would like you to tell us how you intend to tell others the results of your research. Maybe you plan write an article in the Health Systems Trust magazine, 'Update', or in a local or national newspaper, or maybe you would like your research to be published in an established journal, or maybe you plan to hold a workshop following your research.
 7. Finally, you need to write your budget. Try to be as specific as possible. We will need to know the cost of salaries, travel, equipment, stationary, telephone etc. etc.
 8. At the end of your document you should include a list of the references you have used in your document. You should also include a copy of the questionnaire you plan to use.

We do not give any extra points for longer proposals!! We do require that you include all the above information, however we prefer a short concise project proposal, rather than a long proposal with irrelevant information!
