

Top Ten Tips for Funding your Doctoral Research  
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1. Carefully read the Request for Applications (RFA)
  - ❖ Read carefully
  - ❖ Read again
  - ❖ As you write make sure that your grant responds to the RFA
  - ❖ Underline important terms in the RFA
  - ❖ Keep extra copies of RFA
2. Know your content area (literature)
  - ❖ What has been done in this area
  - ❖ Research in progress or published, how are you different
3. Network – talk to others in the field, your faculty, experienced researchers
  - ❖ SNRS a great place to find out what others are doing (or thinking about doing) in your area of interest
  - ❖ Don't be afraid to talk to the experts
4. Look at who they have previously funded
  - ❖ What have they published, presented
5. Establish a writing timeline, but don't spend all your time planning –  
WRITE
6. Organize yourself
  - ❖ Draft copies – organize your drafts, date/time, use track changes
  - ❖ Literature sources
  - ❖ Writing area
7. Typos and grammar – get an editor
8. Follow the directions
  - ❖ READ the RFA
  - ❖ Font size, margins, number of pages
9. Communicate with your funding source, mentor, and grants office
10. If you don't submit you won't get funded, take chances, but play smart!

## Top Ten Tips for Strong Pre-doctoral Grant Application

Na-Jin Park, PhD, RN

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1. Understand the review criteria for pre-doctoral application: Mentor, Applicant, & Research Proposal are equally important.
2. Critically evaluate your strengths in environment and mentor to take advantage of and use all the resources available to you.
3. Assess limitations and address them. If you can do something to make them up, start to do something and address that in your proposal.
4. Plan early.
  - Is a proposal in good shape? Are all instruments in your hands?
  - IRB process will be done by when? : Application usually requires IRB approval or at least evidence of IRB submission.
  - Who can write recommendation letters for you? : Asking and getting the letters will take you a considerable amount of time.
  - Talk to your mentor, director of your program or associate dean for research, and administrative staff for grant application process.
5. Know about the funding source and the program: Mission of the funding source or agency, purpose of the program, and research priorities in the area, etc.
  - Federal Funds (e.g., NIH, Department of Defense)
  - Foundations (e.g., Robert Wood Johnson, Susan G. Komen Foundation)
  - Professional Organizations (e.g., American Cancer Society, American Diabetes Association)
  - Nursing Organizations (e.g., Sigma Theta Tau International, American Nurses Foundation, Oncology Nursing Society, SNRS)
  - Intramural funds
6. Do not assume anything. If you have any questions, talk to and make sure with the agency. Your hard work can be wasted at the last moment because of your simple assumption.
7. Proposal with scientific merit.
  - Keep focus and stay on target.
  - Scientific story to convince reviewers why your study should be funded.
  - Make sure that you really like to study the topic of your proposal.
  - Your topic should match with your mentor's in content area or methodology.
  - Short- and long-term goals
8. Talk to others about your study and get a mock review.
9. Try to be flexible and comfortable with any criticism you may receive. It can make your proposal much stronger.
10. Do not limit yourself only to nursing research. Psychology, education, medicine, allied health or any combination of disciplines are all potentially useful.

**Top Ten List:**  
**Applying for the F31 Individual Pre-Doctoral National Research Service Award (NRSA)**  
**from the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR)**  
**Alison Jones Montpetit, RN, MS**  
**Pre-Doctoral Fellow**  
**University of South Florida, College of Nursing & Medicine**

1. **Identify your NRSA sponsor and/or co-sponsor** (*this is as important as your project*)
  - What do they look for in a sponsor/co/sponsor?
    - NIH funding (proven research track record)
    - Previous successful NRSA students
    - Topic/project match
    - In your proposal, explain how the sponsor/co-sponsor will contribute to your research project, career development and his/her strengths/expertise
2. **Contact your NINR program director early**
  - They can tell you if your idea is appropriate to NINR and the specific portfolio's interest.
  - Your program director is a GUIDE not a GUARANTEE!
  - Email them first and include the following:
    - Ask what method of communication is preferred (email, phone, etc.)
    - Funding mechanism you are interested in (F31)
    - Brief biosketch and concept paper (no more than 1 page each)
    - Sponsor/co-sponsor information
3. **Apply early in your program**
  - This is a training grant; you don't have to be an expert or finished with your coursework
4. **Have an innovative project, including *pilot data***
  - Reviewers want to see progress and that you already have mentorship in place
5. **Search CRISP (<http://crisp.cit.nih.gov/>)**
  - Find out what research has been funded at NINR on your topic area
  - Discuss how your proposal expands on that research and how it furthers the science
6. **Know the mission/s of NINR and the specific scientific portfolio/s**
  - Spell out how your project fits the mission of NINR and/or scientific portfolio
7. **Don't write for the expert**
  - Provide models, show the flow or concept of the study
  - Keep it simple. Anyone should be able to understand what, why and how you are going to carry out your project
  - Be brief, scientific and to the point.
8. **Answer the "so what" factor**
  - Spell out how this project contributes to nursing science
9. **Answer the "then what" factor**
  - Provide a brief description of your planned program of research in the future goals section. All of your research questions should not be answered by your proposal.
  - Explain how your proposal will further develop into future proposals
10. **Conduct a mock review**
  - Give the proposal to someone that does not know anything about research or your topic area; they should be able to follow your plan
  - It will provide different points of view and potential questions you didn't anticipate. Answer those questions. Chances are the reviewers will have the same questions.