

Writing to a Program Officer

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When you have an idea for a grant, one of the first things to do is to find out which agency might be most interested in your research (for the NICHD Demographic and Behavioral Sciences Branch, see <http://www.nichd.nih.gov/about/org/der/branches/pdb/programs/Pages/overview.aspx> for descriptions and links). Then you write to the Program Official in charge of the topical area.

A similar process is advisable for writing to NSF program officials, too.

When you write to the Program Officer, make the email short – 1 screen – they get a lot of email! Attach a draft Specific Aims. In the body of the email include the following points.

The research topic and primary research questions). Most of this will be covered in the Specific Aims you've attached.

5. The estimated budget (direct costs)*. A ballpark only (e.g., \$300,000 annually).
6. Number of years of project (2, 3, 5, years etc.)
7. Plans for disseminating data and research findings

In addition, for K (career) and F (fellowship) awards:

8. Your disciplinary background and institutional affiliation (list collaborators too)
9. The name, disciplinary background, research interests (not required if you include a Specific Aims), and institutional affiliation of your primary mentor, your secondary mentor (if you have one), and other advisors

*A budget should include things like salary + benefits (assume 30% benefits), travel to conferences (\$1800+), laptop (\$1500), GSRs (plus fee remission, which is at least \$15k/year), data collection costs including incentives, survey printing, etc., software licenses, car rentals and lodging for field work, etc.