Conducting and Funding Research
Compiled by the Ohio Psychological Association Science Committee

General Issues in Securing Funding
The responsibility of accounting for the expenditure of public funds is placing increasing pressure on funding agencies to ensure that projects will not only result in original contributions to knowledge, but will also be relevant to the discipline, or have outcomes of an applied nature. In order to be successful, a proposal for funding should demonstrate that the project:

i) is unique and original;
ii) has a sound and clearly described methodology;
iii) is feasible; and,
iv) meets the ethical standards expected in human or animal research.

The proposal must convince the reader, frequently outside the researcher's home discipline, that the project is relevant and has scholarly merit. Equally important, the reviewer must be convinced that the researcher is not only capable of conducting the research, but also has the expertise to conduct this type of research project.

Often the researcher is too close to the project to see that the proposal does not creatively and clearly outline the scope, rationale, objectives, or the methodology. For this reason every proposal should be critically reviewed by a colleague before submission to the external agency. A colleague at another university, who is working in the same or a closely related field and who has been successful in obtaining external research funding, may be particularly helpful. A colleague in your own department with demonstrated success in obtaining grants or contracts also may be willing to critically review the proposal.

Even if you are unsuccessful, there is often valuable experience gained by applying for external funding. Your own ideas may crystallize as you prepare the proposal for a second or third review. Critical comments from colleagues and from the assessors should aid in improving the proposal as you submit another application for funding to the same or a different agency.

Funding Resources
Funding your research can be a challenge, but doable if you know where to look. The following websites offer tips and links to the many grants and scholarships that are out there.

http://www.apa.org/education/grad/funding.aspx - This link focuses on undergraduate, graduate and postdoctoral scholarships, funding and grants.

www.nimh.nih.gov and http://grants.nih.gov/grants/oer.htm - These links contain funding as well as information on research findings in different areas from the National Institutes of Health and the office of Extramural research.
www.psychologicalscience.org - This is the site of the American Psychological Society.

http://www.nsf.gov/funding/ - This National Science Foundation site has information on funding and how to write proposals/grants.
http://fdncenter.org - This is the site of The Foundation Center. It contains information on what foundations are, how to write grants and has free online courses on writing proposals. Try the quick link: individual grant seekers, the helpful tools FAQs link or the learning lab link.

www.grantproposal.com - This link contains more tips on writing proposals.

http://www.marywood.edu/orcc/ - The primary mission of the Office of Research and Community Collaboration is to provide support for externally funded faculty research and community collaborative projects. This includes grants, contracts and cooperative arrangements. The office assists faculty in developing program ideas, identifying sources of funding, and following guidelines for policies related to submission and implementation.

http://www.socialpsychology.org/funding.htm - This site has links that contain information on government programs and private foundations that make research grants in psychology.

www.aaas.org - The home page for the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

**General Guidelines for Winning Grants and Contracts**

1. Parameters: The proposal must meet the purposes and resources of the funding agency.
2. Value of Project: The project will be evaluated according to:
   a. its relevance to current research in the field
   b. whether the project advances knowledge
   c. whether the results are likely to be presented and published in scholarly journals
   d. for some agencies, whether the project has practical application, and whether this information will be shared with practitioners or policy-makers.
3. Feasibility: The project must be feasible. This will be determined by the scope of the project versus:
   a. amount of time required
4. Authority: Evidence that the principal researcher has the experience to conduct the research is provided by:
   a. formal academic qualifications
   b. publication and presentation record - is there a continuous record? If not, explain gaps in your career or record (parental leave, illness, secondment, administrative responsibilities).
   c. previous grants and awards
   d. research (in this area and in others), completed and ongoing; publications in the area of the proposed research
   e. demonstrated knowledge of the relevant literature
   f. approval of the Research Ethics or Animal Care Committee to conduct the proposed research project - often this is not required until funding has been awarded
g. in the case of team projects, a clear indication of each participant's role and academic qualifications

5. Project Design: Poorly conceived and defined projects are probably the most common cause of a negative decision. Clear, concise and well-developed plans for completing the research are essential. This section of the proposal should include:
   a. Statement of the Problem
      - theoretical or practical rationale for the project
      - the purpose of the project and how and why it will add to the body of knowledge in the discipline or profession
   b. Review of the Literature
      - a concise and complete review of the current state of knowledge (adhere to any required page limits for this section)
   c. Research Design
      - research objectives
      - research questions
      - hypotheses to be tested (if any)
      - operational definitions of all concepts
      - procedures for collecting data/information (e.g. survey instrument or experimental design; copies of instruments such as questionnaires and of correspondence with other interested parties or subjects who have agreed to co-operate should be enclosed)
      - data collection plan (e.g. interviewing techniques, library research, mail survey techniques, field procedures, laboratory procedures)
      - data analysis and interpretation plan (i.e. descriptive, causal, statistical, etc.)
      - time frame for work to be completed

6. Budget:
   a. follow agency guidelines, especially with respect to eligible expenses, and in the justification of budget items. All items must be fully justified (e.g., why are 3 RA's not 1 needed; why is a trip to a research site needed).
   b. provide a breakdown of cost per unit, number of units required and total cost. This applies to research assistants (i.e. hours per week and # of weeks) as well as to mileage, subsistence, technical services, etc.
   c. budget summaries and details should be consistent and accurate (check your addition!).

7. Referees: When applying to Canadian agencies, include the names of senior Canadian and international scholars as possible referees (if requested). Referees should be informed about the project (send a copy of the proposal) and be alerted that they may be contacted.

8. Format:
   a. Use appropriate and up-to-date application forms and when an application form is not provided, use the SSHRC or NSERC format as a model. Many of the granting agencies provide application forms on the Internet. Some are available as forms that can be downloaded and edited, others are edited on-line.
   b. The application must be complete, and must be submitted without any typographical, spelling or grammatical errors.
   c. Print Size Standards: Granting agencies are increasingly insisting that the application be submitted with a specified font for ease of photocopying and reading by reviewers.
9. Suggestions:
   a. Write a draft and then read and rewrite several days or weeks later.
   b. Ask a colleague, preferably someone in your field who has successfully obtained research funds, to critique the proposal.

General Considerations in Conducting Research
Assessing the adequacy of the research design is a complex task and involves judgment about:
- the benefits of the study to the field
- how research builds on and adds to existing knowledge
- the likelihood that the study design will yield meaningful results
- the adequacy of the plan for analysis of the data, interpretation of findings, and preparation of reports and useful materials for policy and program development, if appropriate.

In designing a research study, consider the following questions:
1. Who will identify research participants and how will they be solicited? Will they be compensated?
2. How will research participants be informed of study details?
3. Who will collect the data and how will data be collected (e.g., face-to-face interview, self-report, etc.)?
4. What instruments or measures will be used? Will they use language understandable to the participants?
5. How will participant confidentiality be protected and what safety measures will be taken to protect participants from harm?
6. Who will analyze and interpret the data?
7. Is the project designed to assure sensitivity and attention it issues of culture, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation and race?
8. Will funding be adequate to complete the project?

Remember that peer review is an important component of the research process and a way to get others to assist with judging the adequacy of the research design.

Conducting Ethical Research
Any research that is conducted should be done in an ethical manner. Standard 8 of the American Psychological Association’s Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct is devoted to “Research and Publication” and you may view the Code in by clicking here to view the Code of Ethics in its entirety.