WEBINAR: CRAFTING STRONG SPECIFIC AIMS
Sunita Patterson, January 23, 2020

Following are recommendations for **designing** the framework of the project and the scope of each aim and for **writing** the statements of the aims so that they are clear and compelling to the reviewers.

Designing the aims
1. The aims should collectively test the central hypothesis or accomplish the objective.
2. Each aim should have a clear endpoint.
3. Each aim should yield useful information regardless of its outcome.
4. The aims should be similar in scope.
5. The aims should be independent.
6. The aims must be feasible.

Writing the aim statements
7. Use wording that assures success.
8. Use verbs that convey a clear endpoint.
    Strong verbs: isolate, determine, identify, define, discover, elucidate, ascertain
    Weak verbs: examine, explore, evaluate, study, investigate
9. Focus on the outcome rather than the method.
    Weak verbs (for hypothesis-driven aims): perform, measure, characterize, describe, compare, catalog, correlate
10. Use parallel grammatical structure.
11. Make the aim statements clear and concise.

Resources for advice on designing and writing specific aims
- Robertson JD, Russell SW, Morrison DC (Grant Writers Seminars & Workshops). *The Grant Application Writer's Workbook* [chapters 7 and 8]. 2019. http://www.grantcentral.com/
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Draft Specific Aims. 2017. https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/draft-specific-aims
- Peyman JA, Robinson WH, Allen KD. Specific Aims--Do's and Don't's [slides]. https://www.rheumatology.org/Portals/0/Files/Specific%20Aims%20-%20Do%27s%20and%20Don%27ts.pdf

Resources for examples
- National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Sample Applications & More. Revised 2019. https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/sample-applications. [This site offers examples of funded NIH grant applications that demonstrate good grantsmanship. The specific aims are usually presented in brief in the abstract and in the Specific Aims section and described in detail in the Approach section of the Research Strategy.]
- National Institutes of Health. Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools Expenditures and Results (RePORTER) database. https://projectreporter.nih.gov. [In this database of funded NIH grants, you can search for projects using text, such as key terms of interest, or an activity code, such as R01. In the resulting list of projects, click on the title of each to see its abstract, which usually includes the project's specific aims.]

Questions, consultations, editing services
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