

Tips for preparing an application

1. Read the call carefully

Although this may seem like an obvious point, many applicants do not carefully read the call for application. The call clearly stipulates who is eligible for the award, the types of studies that can be funded, and general instructions for submitting applications. Over half of applications to the ADDRf are rejected because the topic does not fall with the funded areas of research

2. Read the application form instructions

The application form indicates the font type and size, spacing, and page limits. These instructions are intended to ensure that proposals are as concise as possible. These instructions are not followed often and consequently, some promising candidates are unsuccessful.

3. Carefully write your proposed research and provide adequate detail

Carefully write your application and **do not** "copy-and-paste" from your proposal. The proposal should be carefully structured, concise, yet contain all information to ensure that researchers in disciplines outside your field can understand what you plan to do. You may use sub-headings to organize your text.

Your background should include a critical synthesis and evaluation of existing knowledge. Importantly, you must highlight the research gaps your proposed research will fill. In other words, in your background you want to tell the reader: What is known about this topic? What is not known? What are the controversial issues? What will your own work contribute to the state of knowledge?

The research design section is extremely important and most evaluators will focus on this section. Be specific rather than general. For example, rather than describing what a focus group discussion is and what its benefits are; instead state that you *will conduct three focus groups with 6-8 males aged 15-24 years to understand community perceptions about issue XYZ*. Be clear about your research design, the measures you will use, and the analysis you plan to conduct.

4. Provide the list of references, but only those references cited in your application

Do not copy the entire reference list from your proposal. Only provide the full references that you have actually cited in the application. As a rule of thumb, more than 30 references is too much

5. Your budget should be as realistic as possible and should only include allowable costs

Ensure that the costs provided are reasonable and within the budget limit. For instance, don't budget several thousand dollars to pay for datasets that are freely available online. Overhead costs, tuition, or miscellaneous costs are not allowed. The budget narrative should provide sufficient detail for the various line items where funds are being requested. If you have other sources of funding, provide the amounts and the sources.

6. Ensure that you complete the timeline

List all activities (including those that you have already completed) you need to undertake for your research (e.g., literature review, applying for ethics, data collection etc.). Ensure that the timelines provided are realistic.

7. Your statement of research interests should give a comprehensive picture of your research interests and professional goals

Key elements to be included include your research goals, the basis for these goals, your career trajectory, and the preparations you have taken to meet your career goals. It is also useful to indicate how the fellowship advances your career goals

8. Complete the CV section for yourself and your supervisor

Ensure that all required information is provided and pay attention to page limits. You may need to provide a few select publications. Many applicants are scored poorly because their supervisor's CV is scanty.

9. Carefully review your application for completeness, grammar and spellings.

Grammatical errors easily put off reviewers! Read and re-read your application. It is also a good idea to get a colleague to review your application

10. Have your supervisor review your application

It is good practice to ensure that your supervisor reviews your work before submission. Likewise, if you do receive comments on your application from the application review committee, share these with your supervisor

11. Ask your references to submit their recommendation letters in good time

Don't wait until the last minute to ask for recommendation letters. Ask people who are likely to write you an outstanding reference letter and who can speak about your skills, research, and suitability for the fellowship.

12. Check the deadline and submit your work before the deadline

The deadline for applications is 11:59pm (Nairobi Time) on April 15, 2017. Many good applications are rejected because they are received after the deadline