



Specific Aims: NIH

Title

The title should create a good first impression, inform the reviewer of the proposed research topic, and engage the reviewer's interest.

Note: NIH limits titles to 81 characters (including spaces).

1st Paragraph

- ◆ Introduce the project.
 - Relate the project to the agency's mission.
- ◆ Educate the reviewer.
 - Summarize the important knowledge.
- ◆ Identify the gap in the knowledge or state the critical need.
- ◆ Identify the problem created by the gap or need.

2nd Paragraph

- ◆ Describe your long-range research or career goal(s).
 - Ensure that your long-range career goal aligns with the agency's mission.
- ◆ State your overall project goal.
 - Ensure that the overall project goal addresses an identified gap in knowledge and represents a step toward achieving your long-range career goal.
- ◆ Present your central hypothesis (or, alternatively, a statement of need).
 - Be sure that you present a true hypothesis – one that can be objectively tested to determine its validity – rather than a predetermined conclusion.
- ◆ Explain your rationale for pursuing the project.
 - Indicate what it will be possible to accomplish when your research is complete.
- ◆ Describe your qualifications and research environment.
 - How you are better prepared than other, equally qualified researchers.
 - Identify special training, expertise, experience, and, most importantly, relevant preliminary data.
 - Identify access to human and animal subject pools; to unique equipment and instrumentation; and to collaborations and partnerships.

3rd Paragraph

- ◆ Delineate your specific aims in a bulleted list.
 - Ensure that specific aims correlate with your central hypothesis.
 - Ensure that all specific aims relate to and support your overall project goal.
 - Provide conceptual rather than descriptive specific aims.
 - Delineate a reasonable number of specific aims, presented in a logical order.
 - “Why” aims are generally stronger than “what” aims.
 - Define a clear purpose, working hypothesis or statement of need, and expected outcome for each specific aim.
 - Make sure no specific aim is dependent on the successful outcome of another aim.

4th Paragraph

- ◆ Identify the project's innovation, e.g., a unique approach or technology.
- ◆ Delineate the project's expected outcomes.
 - Should validate central hypothesis and resolve gap in knowledge.
- ◆ Summarize the project's significance
 - Provides segue to Background and Significance

Special Note

Ideally, the Specific Aims section of an NIH application should be limited to approximately 1 to 1.5 pages.

Also note that NIH now requires that applications be prepared using one of four fonts: Arial, Helvetica, Georgia, or Palatino Linotype.