



Professional Development

About Us | GSA Bookstore | Geoscience Initiatives | Meetings | Member Services | Professional Development | Publications | Public Interest

SCIENCE STEWARDSHIP SERVICE

Carers

Conferences

Congressional Science Fellow

Grants

Post-Doc

Graduate

Undergraduate

Shlemon

Travel

Other

GeoCorps America

Mentor Opportunities

Grants

Return to [Graduate Student Research Grants](#)

Suggestions for Research Grant Applicants from the Committee on Research Grants

The main purpose of your application is to convince GSA's Committee on Research Grants that supporting your proposal would be a good use of GSA's funds. Your proposal will be read by panel members who are experienced professional geologists, but who are not necessarily experts in your particular field. Because they are evaluating proposals competing for limited funds, they must be critical and skeptical; only the best proposals will be funded. Your number one job is to capture their interest. If you describe an important problem and then explain how you intend to solve it, you convert the reviewer from a skeptic to an advocate for funding your work. If, after reading your proposal, a panelist still says "So what? Why is this important?", or "What's the problem being addressed?", or "Can these objectives be achieved using these techniques?", then you have not been successful. One good way to pre-judge how well you have gotten your points across is to re-read your application (before submitting it), putting yourself in the position of a reviewer. Or, better yet, ask another student or one of your instructors to read it from that perspective.

When you look at your proposal from the point of view of the reader, you will see why it is so important to describe the problem you are addressing or the hypothesis you plan to test. Without this firmly established, it is pointless to tell the panel all the things you will do in the field or lab. Don't stop there, however! The logical next question is "Is that problem or hypothesis significant enough to be worth working on?" One way to assess this is to ask yourself, "Assuming I am successful in doing everything I say I will, how many geologists would want to hear the results?" If you conclude "not many" then you need to rethink why you chose the project and explain its importance more convincingly. Don't feel that you, singlehandedly, need to solve the most pressing problem in geology-the scope of any project must be limited to what can be realistically accomplished-but do worry about how your results will contribute to the solution of a fundamental problem in your field, or why your field area is ideal for addressing a significant regional or topical problem. If your project is part of a large project, in the U.S. or overseas, make sure your part is clearly defined.

Once you have established the significance of your project, outline what you will actually do-i.e., your research strategy. Make sure that you explain to the reviewer how these steps will lead you to answers to the questions you have set out to solve. This is the time to be specific: don't leave it to the panel to decide whether your research plan will answer the questions, tell them how it will! As for the budget, you should show the committee that you have carefully investigated possible expenses and have planned a realistic budget.

It is important that this application represents your preparation and presentation. You should be the sole author, with only advice and light editing assistance from your advisor, but without direct use (cut and paste or extensive paraphrasing) of other text (such as advisor's writing or proposals prepared for other agencies). Point out to your advisors the instructions on the back of the "Appraisal of Applicant" form.

The reverse side of this form includes a revision of an evaluation summary form to be used in 2000. Committee members will prepare an evaluation for each application they review, whether or not they are actually funded. The summary indicates the general nature of the committee's evaluation of the proposal. They will be mailed to applicants shortly after grants have been awarded.

While GSA research awards are competitive, the Society is genuinely supportive of you. Each year the composition of the panel changes, but every year, we on the panel are impressed and excited by the ideas you present in your proposals. We wish you success with your research and good luck with your proposal!



[top](#)