MDRF Grant Tip Sheet

It’s time to be thinking about applying for a Mark Diamond Research Fund grant. With each grant application cycle, the same sort of problem areas arising. So, here are some tips to consider when putting together your grant application:

First, be sure you turn in one (1) original application, PLUS three (3) copies of the full application starting on page 3 AND four (4) copies of the Abstract, Budget, Budget Justification, Letters of Recommendation, Price Quotes, and Glossary.

- A Glossary is now a mandatory part of your MDRF grant application.
- Be sure you remember to sign the original application IN INK and that your email address is accurate.
- The Committee’s Assurance Forms (3) always have problems. I recommend you put brightly colored “sign here” tabs nest to each of the areas where you have your committee members INITIAL every one of the lines on the Committee Assurance Form AND where your advisor must sign and date the form IN INK. Putting an X or a check mark where your advisor should be signing his or her initials is NOT ACCEPTABLE.
- Completely fill out every box on the Part II Applicant Status page. On #13 you must add an explanation regardless of whether you check Yes or No.
- On the Table of Contents Parts VI through VIII must have a page number. The Appendices section must have either INC, PEND, or NA listed.
- Abstracts are always difficult to write. I suggest you write your abstract last after you have your plan written up. It will make the abstract easier. Eliminate as much of the jargon as possible from the abstract. In 250 words, you do not have space to define things. Save the details for the plan. The Abstract must be in the box on the one page in the application. Single-space it if necessary. Do not exceed 250 words. Do not uses first person (I, me, my, us, we). You have four points to address in your abstract. Be certain you include all four as clearly as possible.
- **BOLD** the terms you have in your Glossary and **bold** them throughout your application.
- Be certain that your Research or Project Plan is double-spaced, 12 point font, discussed all five required points, and does not exceed three (3) pages. An easy way to insure you talk about all of these points are to put them in the order that they can be found in the gray box on the application form. Address each of the discussion areas in a separate paragraph to insure that you describe every required element of the research/project plan. Beginning the paragraph with the discussion element in bold will help with the clarity of the plan. To give yourself three full pages, delete the gray box from the application form. You can also use very narrow margins. Just be certain when you print out the application that all of the text is actually printing out.
Only items you have cited in your Research or Project Plan should be listed in Part VI References Cited page. This can only be one (1) page long.

The Budget: Math errors abound. Recheck your math to be certain that the columns add up BOTH across and down, as well as Section A minus Section B really does equal Section C. Section C should not exceed the total allowable amount of MDRF grants ($1000 for Masters, $1500 for MFA, $2000 for Ph.D.). By the way, the box at the bottom isn’t just for looks. It needs to be filled out, too.

There is a Non-Fundable Items list on the GSA MDRF webpage. It is not comprehensive, but will give you a good indication of areas that are not fundable in MDRF grants. Check it out before you put together your budget. If 51% of your Section C items are non-fundable, your grant will be an automatic resubmit.

Budget Justification: Don’t go over three (3) pages, again 12 point font that is double-spaced. Be certain you justify everything in your Budget Section C. An easy way to be certain is to list them in the justification in the same order you have them in your budget. Justify EVERYTHING. Explain Give specific reasons for why you need this amount of a chemical, why you need to conduct research in a particular facility or archive, why you need to conduct research in an archive for 15 days, why you need to interview 50 people, why your interviews will take six hours over a period of two weeks, why this special analytical software is necessary, or why you need three of the same items. If you must rent equipment from a particular source (such as this is the only one in the area where you are conducting your research and to go further afield for other places greatly increase the cost, if equipment is even available elsewhere in the region, you MUST supply proof of this in Appendix H.

ALL appendices MUST HAVE A COVER SHEET. See examples on the MDRF Grant Writing Tutorial on the GSA MDRF webpage. Clearly note on EACH document in the Appendix what the document is, such as writing the Appendix letter and title at the top of each page. HIGHLIGHT the items and the prices in ALL price quotes.

Letter of Recommendation: There must be one (1) letter of recommendation in MDRF applications. This MUST be written by a faculty member. It should be on department or institution letterhead. The letter must address the significance of your research or final project and contributions it will have to your field of study. DO NOT submit the original and copies in sealed envelopes.

ATC: This refers to the Acceptance to Candidacy (ATC) letter, not your ATC application form. DO NOT include a copy your ATC application form in your MDRF application. If your ATC is pending, note PEND in the Table of Contents and on the Appendix C cover sheet.

Letters of Access: These must be included for institutions, labs, archives, or libraries not on the UB campus, as well as locations where you will be conducting human subject research (such as outside the courthouse, a hospital, an orphanage, or an Indigenous nation). Letter must be on institution letterhead and clearly delineate the type of access you will receive (can be in the form of an email). If you listed use of a lab or facility beyond your own lab or facility on campus in the In-Kind Section B of the Budget, it would be good to include a letter of access for this location, as well.

Price Quotes: This is a serious problem area in MDRF grants. Be absolutely certain you have three (3) price quotes for EVERY individual budget item over $200.00. NOTE: three (3) quotes from the same airline for 3 different days is NOT acceptable. If it is impossible to obtain three quotes because only one company sells a product or service, YOU MUST PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION to support your claim (a Google search result with one company is good proof). You must also have three (3) price quotes for multiples of the same item that total more than $200.00. For example: 6 MICROPHONES @ $100.00
EACH FOR A TOTAL $600.00. FAILURE TO PROVIDE THREE ADEQUATE QUOTES FOR ITEMS THAT EXCEED $200.00 WILL RESULT IN IMMEDIATE DENIAL OF THE GRANT. DO NOT include quotes for ANYTHING that is LESS THAN a total amount of $200 or fixed items such as Food or Mileage. At top of EACH page WRITE or TYPE the quote number and the budget item as listed in your Budget Section C and highlight the item and price. Note: the least expensive quote should be the one in your Budget Section C. NOTE: If the quote is not in English, you must translate it and convert the prices to U.S. dollars AND include an exchange rate website conversion with the quotes. Failure to translate quotes into English, convert to dollars, and include exchange rates is an automatic resubmit. If you use a travel website such as Priceline, Expedia, or Orbitz you MUST make certain you have THREE DIFFERENT AIRLINES, OR THREE DIFFERENT HOTEL CHAINS, OR THREE DIFFERENT RENTAL CAR COMPANIES listed. OR YOU MUST INCLUDE THREE DIFFERENT TRAVEL WEBSITES as your three quotes.

- For more tips, visit the GSA MDRF webpage and go page-by-page through the grant application with the MDRF Grant Writing Tutorial.