

Questions to Ask & Answer about Your Idea

The questions below are imperative to gaining both internal and external support for your proposal. Your idea must be able to persuade and compel others to lend their manpower, financial resources, and/or time to your project. Keep this in mind when answering the following questions.

Why is your idea unique?

Why is your idea timely?

Why is your idea urgent?

Why is your idea compelling?

If your idea is funded and the project implemented, how will this project capitalize on your institution's strengths?

If your idea is funded and the project implemented, how will this project help overcome some of your institution's weaknesses?

Questions to Ask to Develop a Fundable Idea

Begin the exercise for your research proposal by articulating your thoughts concerning a problem or need you have noticed. Consider the following questions while filling in your responses below: What do you want to do, and how do you see yourself carrying out your ideas? Are your objectives and expectations in line with those of your organization?

What problem or need am I addressing?

What is your hypothesis or problem statement?

What are your research questions?

Why is the problem important and interesting?

What is the ultimate purpose of your research/applied research?

What actions will you take, and how will they lead to a solution for your problem?

What resources will you need to complete the research (equipment, graduate students, facilities, and access to the industry)?

How will your project improve integration of research and education?

Workbook for NSF Researchers

What will you know at the conclusion of the project that we don't know now?

What are some of the priority areas and systems that will be affected by or involved in your project?

How will your project improve demographics and diversity among students within your discipline?

How will your project broaden participation, especially for underrepresented groups of people?

What international collaborations, if any, will your project include?

How will your results be measured and evaluated?

How will the results from your evaluations be disseminated?

Grant Training Center Workbook

Building Intellectual Merit

This worksheet will help you to add intellectual merit to your project. The more detailed your answers, the stronger your project summary will be.

How will the proposed activity advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields?

How well qualified is the proposer (individual or team) to conduct the project?

To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?

How well conceived and organized is the proposed activity?

Is there sufficient access to resources?

Considering Broader Impacts

The answers you provide here will ensure that you have thought over the broader impacts of your project. Further, the questions will help you generate alternative and innovative approaches to your project.

Describe how the activity will advance discovery and understanding, while promoting teaching, training, and learning.

Describe how the proposed activity broadens participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.) in your project.

How will your project enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships?

Describe your plan for disseminating results broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding.

What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?