RESEARCH AND PROGRAM DESIGN

The research plan, narrative, or project description, is the section of the proposal where you provide complete details on your proposed work.

The program solicitation or guidelines will usually provide an outline for the research plan. The following is a standard outline.

A. Brief Introduction
B. Problem Statement or Needs Assessment
C. Specific Aims or Objectives
D. Background and Significance
E. Preliminary Studies/Progress Report
F. Research Design, Methodology, or Plan of Work
G. Qualifications
H. Human Subjects (for NIH)
I. Literature Cited

Expanded information on several of the bullet points is listed below.

B. This part of the proposal is critical and must be based on objective data, not subjective impressions. The problem statement should:
   ▪ Be related to the purposes and goals of the funder
   ▪ Be reasonable, not tackle too many problems for the amount of funds and time available
   ▪ Make only supportable assumptions
   ▪ Present a compelling case
   ▪ Be interesting to the reviewer

F. This section describes the activities to be conducted to achieve the desired objectives. It also includes the rationale for choosing a particular approach. Generally, a straightforward, chronological description of the operations of the proposed project works most effectively. The methodology section should meet the following criteria:
   ▪ Flows naturally from problems and objectives
   ▪ Clearly describes program activities
   ▪ States reasons for the selection of activities
   ▪ Describes sequence of activities
   ▪ Describes staffing of program
   ▪ Describes subjects/clients and their selection
   ▪ Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be accomplished within the time and resources of the grant
   ▪ Provides a visual representation of the timeline of activities
I. When you cite your references, use a standard format in your discipline applied consistently. List all of the authors of each study (avoid et. al. when trying to save space). And, consider utilizing a citation tool such as ENDNOTE to ensure ease of tracking and ordering your citations if major sections of the text are edited and citations must be moved.