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## How Much Detail for Your Shorter Application?

In our November 12, 2009, article "The Art of Application" we said that impact trumps experimental details for the shorter applications.

Here are some tips to help you focus your application strategically so you can convey its impact in less detail and space.

\* Focus on your strategy. Spend less time writing the application and more on your strategy.

o Rather than detailing all your experiments, describe your strategy in the application.

+ Think of various, interesting pathways you could pursue depending on your results.

+ Give details for initial experiments, then show branching depending on the outcome of the research: if this works you will do x, if it doesn't you will do y.

o Use graphics to convey complex information in a small space.

\* Detail experiments that let you shine.

o If your first experiments are pedestrian or contracted out, focus on those that show your unique expertise or are especially interesting.

o Highlight what you can do that's different and that you do well. Excelling here also helps the investigator review criterion.

\* Limit your aims. A strong application probably has no more than one Specific Aim for each year of requested support.

\* Know when detail is needed.

o Give preliminary data to show you are on the right track.

o Give more detail for unique or new methods.

\* Know when you can skip details. In general, describe methods in less detail than you would in a publication.

o Reference any published methods.

o Add enough detail to convince reviewers that you understand what the work entails and have the resources and expertise to conduct the research.

+ If you're a more experienced investigator, cite relevant work so reviewers will know of your expertise.

+ If you're a new investigator, show you can handle an experimental method. Point out if you've used it before. If you have, cite and skip the description.

+ If you lack the expertise to accomplish any of the work, refer to others who do. Make sure they tailor their biosketch to highlight experience that supports their role on your application.

For more detailed advice, go to our updated Strategy for Picking a Project in Part 2. Game Plan of the NIH Grant Cycle: Application to Renewal at [www.niaid.nih.gov/ncn/grants/cycle/part02.htm#d](http://www.niaid.nih.gov/ncn/grants/cycle/part02.htm#d)