

Workshop Evaluation Report

Practicing NIH-standard proposal writing for clinical,
epidemiological, and health services/policy/economics research
May 28-30, 2016, Tehran, Iran

The main objectives of the workshop were

- 1) Introduce the required minimum standards for writing a proposal set by the National Institute of Health (NIH).
- 2) Shape up the proposal ideas into a draft that can be further developed into a standard proposal

The workshop included lectures, working groups, peer-reviews and troubleshooting. After presenting the minimum standards of a typical NIH proposal, the instructor asked the principal investigator (PI) of each team to present their proposal. Each group had one hour to present the work in the requested format. Other proposal team members helped the PI with the presentation if needed but their primary task was to take notes. The instructor and other workshop participants interactively provided comments to improve the proposals. The proposal teams were mostly focusing on improving their work and re-presenting their proposal with incorporating the comments into the body of the proposal.

The workshop well attended by five teams/proposals including 22 participants. They were from three different medical universities (five research institutes).

The workshop consisted of three lectures, two group works and fifteen presentation and discussion sessions on different section of the research plan. The workshop lecturer and facilitator was Ali Mirzazadeh from University of California, San Francisco.

Evaluation of the workshop lectures, discussions and group works

Overall, more than 90% of participants acknowledged that the workshop's presentations were very/extremely useful and about 86% mentioned that it was very to extremely applicable to their future work; about the same (81%) agreed that the work groups were very/extremely useful. As reported, the most useful session was working group on specific aims. Only less than 5% participants were not satisfied and had issue with the usefulness of the working groups, and proposal presentation and discussion sessions (Figure 1).

How useful the lectures, working groups and presentations were?

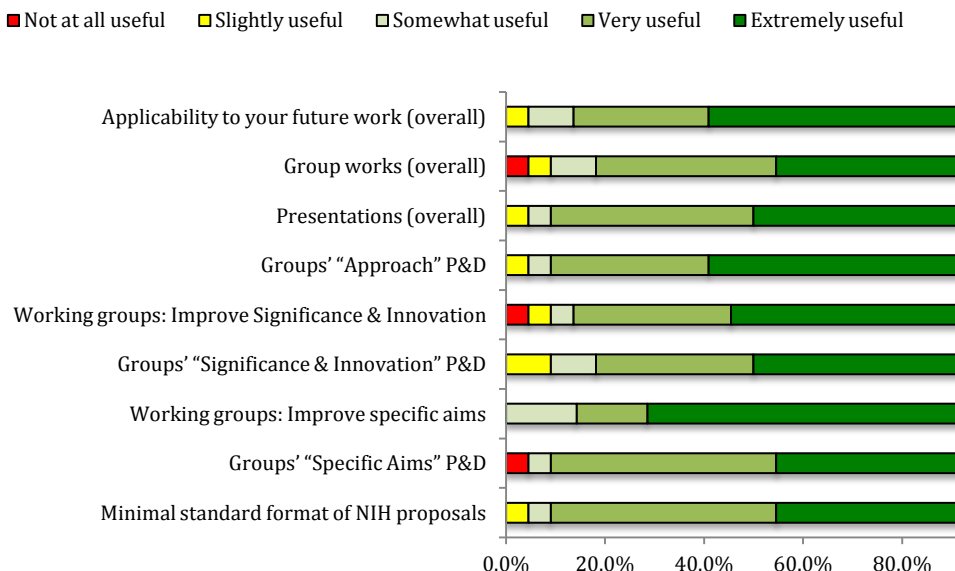


Figure 1 - Overall evaluation of the workshop, lectures, group works, presentations and discussions (P&D)

Workshop lecturer/facilitator performance

The lecturer/facilitator performance is presented in Figure 2. Overall, for all aspects, more than 86% of the participants score the lecturer's performance as excellent or very good. About 5% of them suggested that the workshop lecturer should work on his ability to answer questions and making a clear take home message.

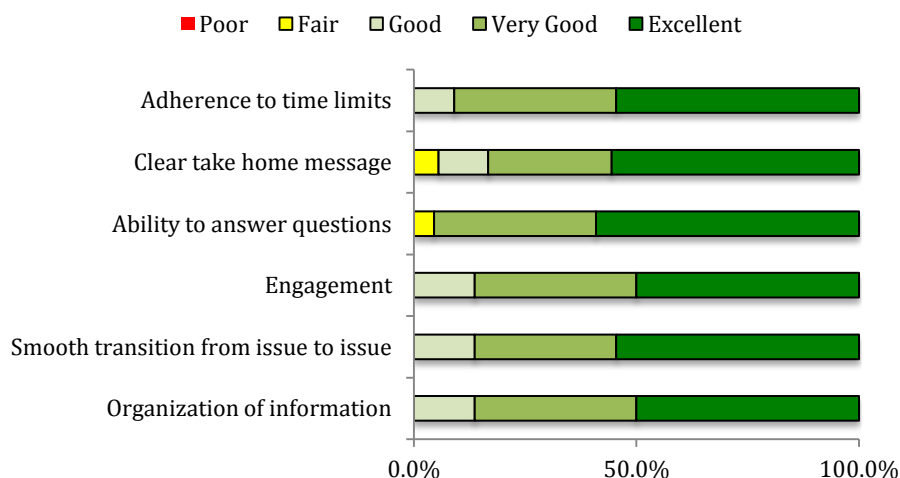


Figure 2 - Workshop lecturer/facilitator performance

The evaluation on the workshop organization

As presented in Figure 3, most of the participants were very satisfied with the pre-workshop information/communications and workshop venue, and less about the audio-visual equipment and meals/refreshments.

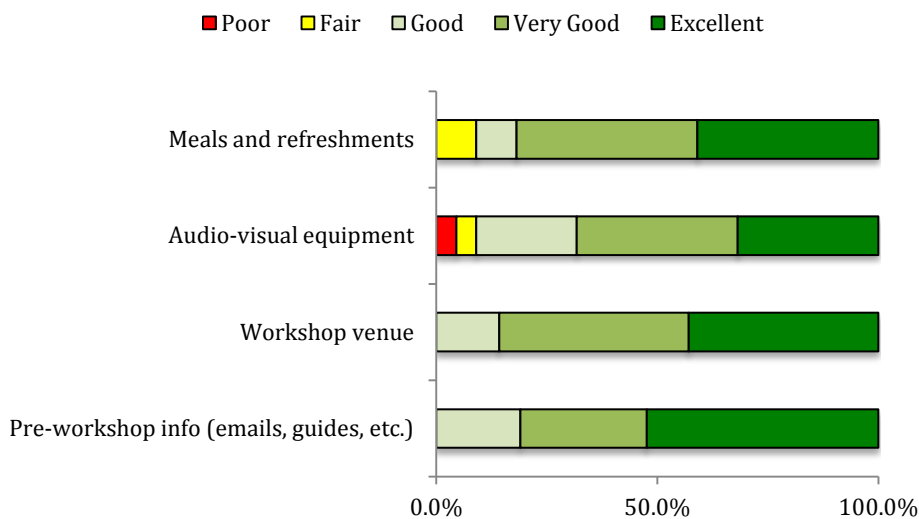


Figure 3 - Evaluation of the workshop organization

Additional comments and suggestions

Main strengths and weaknesses of the workshop, as reported by participants, are listed in

Table 1. Numbers in the () are the number of participants that made such a point. The most frequent mentioned strength of the workshop was facilitators' knowledge and skills, and then the participatory and friendly environment.

While many had not listed any weak points, a few have acknowledged some weak points of the workshop as tight schedule, audio equipment, meals and venue.

Few suggestions for improvement were expanding the workshop to five days, providing more related and relevant examples of NIH accepted proposals, considering follow-up workshop for non-technical components of an NIH grant like budgeting, and add a session to review the NIMAD and NIH website for proposal preparation and submission.

Table 1 - Strengths, weaknesses and suggestions to further improve the quality of the workshop

Strengths	Weaknesses	Other suggestions
Facilitator's knowledge and skills (8)	Tight schedule – need to be at least five days (3)	Present NIMAD or NIH websites (1)
Participatory and friendly environment (7)	Microphone needed (3)	Extend the workshop and add some off days in between to allow digest and improve the proposal (1)
Considering different view points (3)	Meals were rich and make us feel drowsy in the afternoon (1)	Give more examples from NIH accepted proposals, particular those in the same area of the workshop accepted proposals (1)
Time management (3)	Incomplete explanation of every section in an NIH grant application (1)	Expand this workshop or have other workshops to cover other components of an NIH application like budgeting (1)
Group discussion and peer-review (3)	Ventilation was not good (1)	As an incentive, after the workshop choose the best one for possible funding by NIMAD (1)
Up-to-date materials (3)	One proposal was not ready enough for being discussed in the workshop and so took so many time (1)	
Having participants from different fields and perspectives (2)	There are better options for the workshop venue (1)	
Practicality and applicability to future work (2)		
Workshop venue (1)		

Numbers in the () are the number of participants that made such a point

Agenda

Practicing NIH-standard proposal writing for clinical, epidemiological, and health services/policy/economics research

May 28-30, 2016, Tehran, Iran

Language: the speaking languages are Farsi and English and writing language is only English.

Schedule

Day 1	Topics	Lecturer
0800	Welcome, opening remarks	Bitia Mesgarpour
0815	Introductions, learning objectives, and ice breaker	Ali Mirzazadeh
0830	Minimal standard format of NIH proposals	Ali Mirzazadeh
0930	Groups' "Aims" presentation and discussion	Group I
1030	Break	----
1045	Groups' "Aims" presentation and discussion	Group II
1145	Groups' "Aims" presentation and discussion	Group III
1245	Lunch	----
1330	Groups' "Aims" presentation and discussion	Group IV
1430	Break	----
1445	Groups' "Aims" presentation and discussion	Group V
1545	Working groups: Improve their draft with troubleshooting	All groups
1700	Recap	Ali Mirzazadeh
Day 2	Topics	Lecturer
0800	What we learned from yesterday (today: significant / innovation)?	Ali Mirzazadeh
0900	Groups' "significant / innovation" presentation and discussion	Group I
1000	Groups' "significant / innovation" presentation and discussion	Group II
1100	Break	----
1115	Groups' "significant / innovation" presentation and discussion	Group III
1215	Lunch	----
1300	Groups' "significant / innovation" presentation and discussion	Group IV
1400	Groups' "significant / innovation" presentation and discussion	Group V
1500	Break	----
1515	Working groups: Improve their draft with troubleshooting	All groups
1700	Recap	Ali Mirzazadeh
Day 3	Topics	Lecturer
0800	What we learned from yesterday (today: approach)?	Ali Mirzazadeh
0900	Groups' "approach" presentation and troubleshooting	Group I
1000	Groups' "approach" presentation and troubleshooting	Group II
1100	Break	----
1115	Groups' "approach" presentation and troubleshooting	Group III
1215	Lunch	----
1300	Groups' "approach" presentation and troubleshooting	Group IV
1400	Break	----
1415	Groups' "approach" presentation and troubleshooting	Group V
1515	Workshop evaluation and closing remarks	Bitia Mesgarpour

One-page proposal format

Title (one line), **Significance** (100 words - Why your research project is important? You should prove your idea is essential for funding), **Innovation** (100 words - What are the new aspects of your project that have not been touched in previous studies), **Specific Aims** (50 words per aim, usually three aims), **Approach** (50 words per aim - How do you want to perform the study?), **Data** (50 words - Explain your dataset), **Analysis** (50 words per aim, Explain your hypothesis and analysis approach for each aim), **Power/Sample size** (20 words, How did you calculate the power/sample size?), **Limitations** (30 words - Briefly explain your limitations), **Future work** (30 words - Your plan to extend this study in the future).

- The maximum number of words: 1000 words.
- Margins of the page: 2 mm from all sides. Font: Calibri 10, Spacing: no space.