

Tips for writing an interdisciplinary research proposal

Interdisciplinary global health research is important for tackling complex problems and improving health outcomes. The National Institute for Health Research's second round of applications for Global Health Research Units has been launched which emphasizes the need for interdisciplinary research. This bulletin provides tips from a literature review and interview data from IMPALA researchers, about how to write an interdisciplinary global health research proposal.

General principles about writing interdisciplinary research proposals

- Learn enough about each others' **disciplinary methods** to have a **shared understanding** for writing the proposal methods
- Be **transparent and open-minded** to different approaches/perspectives; provide a psychologically 'safe' space
- When encountering frustration, reassess the **reason for, and maybe reconfigure, the interdisciplinary approach**

Before writing an interdisciplinary research proposal

- Identify the broad research question and **justify using an interdisciplinary approach**
- Identify **relevant disciplines** and then potential research collaborators, including non-research ones
- Facilitate a proposal writing meeting **to bring collaborators on board** and to plan the writing process

Proposal development process

- Develop a **shared vision**, for example by developing a project theory of change
- Define and frame the critical research problems **collaboratively** considering;
What could we do, what should we do, what will we do?
The 'unknowns' and the 'overlaps' among disciplines
- Develop the first proposal **outline**; identify a **platform** for sharing and updating documents
- Assemble a **proposal writing group** - include a research coordinator and manager to help with
 - Efficient and effective coordination
 - Drafting management and governance arrangements
- Agree on **roles and responsibilities**, and a **time plan**; **track progress** and hold each other **accountable**

What to include in an interdisciplinary research proposal

- Specify **why** an interdisciplinary approach is needed, **which** disciplines, and **how** they will be **integrated**
- Summarise the **interdisciplinary skills and experience** of the researchers involved, and budget for them
- Describe **how** interdisciplinarity will be reflected in the project **outputs and outcomes**
- Describe the **leadership** and management **strategy** to deliver the outcomes, including the **tracking indicators**

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