My pithy advice in writing any grant application is: “Address a gap.” The National Institute of Health research grant applications specifically require it. It is a good general practice for any grant application. It implies 5 crucial factors: 1) know, describe and interpret the existing literature in the field adequately to: 2) identify what is missing (i.e., the “gap”), 3) formulate a testable hypothesis, 4) design a research study that will "till the gap," and 5) make a convincing case that if the hypothesis is supported, how the field would be advanced by having filled the gap.

Thus, by addressing a gap adequately, the applicant would demonstrate knowledge of the field, creativity to identify what needs to be discovered, skill at formulating an insightful hypothesis, professional ability to design a valid research project to test the hypothesis, and eloquence to explain the implications.

Dr. Barry Komisaruk, Associate Dean of the Graduate School, Professor II, Department of Psychology, Rutgers University Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, Rutgers, Newark (R-N)

It is imperative that students learn how to develop and refine each section of the grant proposal: introduction materials, the narrative, the budget and justification, and supportive materials. Even though the students may be in an environment that supports the development of several of those components, it is important that these students know all aspects. It is important that they know how to make their proposal as concise and clear as possible. Also, it is important that students identify seasoned colleagues and mentors to review their work for serious critique. This can be brutal at first, but take each opportunity as a learning experience. It is further important to keep trying that you will not be funded every time.

Dr. Wendy Nehring, Dean of Nursing, East Tennessee State University
...it's key for students to work closely with their mentors when applying for grants, scholarships, and fellowships. Faculty recommendations are all-important. Also, the foundations and granting-institutions are often quite specific in what they seek in an applicant and an application. Faculty often know the institutions and are very knowledgeable about who should apply and how they should apply. In the sciences, the application process must be closely integrated with the mentor’s research. In the humanities and social sciences, there is much greater leeway.

Dr. Gary Roth, Vice Chancellor for Academic Programs and Services, R-N

It is always a challenge to look for external funding, however, persistence is an important component of the search....For international students one possible way to go is to search for organizations in their country of origin that assist students who are currently in the USA...Very important to keep in mind: Look for qualification for applicants; make sure that qualifications are met. Keep in mind deadlines, and do not get discouraged. All the best!

Dr. Connie Wibrowski, Dean of Student Affairs, R-N

The most difficult task when writing a grant is to view your writing from the point of view of the reviewer. Therefore have the key portions (such as abstract and/or summary of aims or goals) read by someone who is not familiar with your project. Do not explain anything to them; just listen to see what they understand only from reading your text. You may be surprised, and you will almost certainly need to re-edit.

Dr. Phillip Yeagle, Dean, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, R-N

Advice gathered by Patricia Bender, Research Specialist, Research Office, Newark