



Guidelines for a well-structured Specific Aims Page for an NIH Application

Source: NIH Grant Applications- [The Anatomy of a Specific Aims Page by Michelle S.](#)

The Specific Aims section is crucial in an NIH grant application. It's your chance to rapidly gain the reviewers' trust and convince them of the importance of funding your work. Additionally, you need to demonstrate that your team is the most qualified for the project. Given its centrality, you should draft this section first, as it acts as a concise version of your entire grant. Once this is solidified, it will guide the writing of the remaining sections.

1st Paragraph: Introduction

Your primary goal in this paragraph is to engage reviewers by introducing your research topic. You need to:

- First Sentence/Hook: Clearly define your research and its importance.
- Existing Knowledge: Briefly summarize the current understanding in the field, ensuring clarity and conciseness.
- Knowledge Gap: Highlight the existing gap your research intends to bridge. While emphasizing essential points, avoid excessive italicizing or underlining as it might distract the reader.
- Critical Need: Describe the innovative method, technique, or solution you propose and its significance. Your proposal should represent a natural progression in the field.

2nd Paragraph: The Solution

Here, you should present your solution to the knowledge gap and assert your team's capabilities:

- Purpose and Method: Clearly explain your intentions, reasons, and methods.
- While this section's content might vary depending on your research type (hypothesis-driven or tool development), essential elements include:
- Long-Term Goal: State your overarching goal, ensuring alignment with the funding entity's mission without being overly specific.
- Hypothesis and Objectives: Clearly articulate your main hypothesis and how your project addresses the need. Ambiguous hypotheses might confuse reviewers.
- Rationale: Describe how you formulated your hypothesis using previous studies. Highlight the potential outcomes of your project and link them to the funder's mission.
- Qualifications: Summarize why your team, backed by preliminary data and resources, is best suited for this research.

3rd Paragraph: Research Aims

Detail the aims guiding your hypothesis testing. These aims should be interconnected but not reliant upon one another, ensuring the whole project isn't jeopardized by unexpected results in one area. For each aim:

- Devote 2-4 sentences to describe the experimental strategy and its role in addressing the larger hypothesis.
- Assign an actionable title that ties back to the hypothesis.
- Summarize the experimental method and expected outcomes. Using headings or bullet points can aid clarity.

4th Paragraph: Concluding Summary

This essential yet often-neglected section provides a holistic view of your proposal. It should touch upon:

- Innovation: Define the novelty your completed proposal would introduce to the field.
- Expected Outcomes: Recap the anticipated results, if not covered in the aims.
- Impact: Conclude by highlighting the broader positive influence of your proposal, echoing themes introduced in the opening.