

Barts Charity: Plain English guidelines for grant applicants

Version 30, 7 July 2015.

When you write your application, be clear, concise and precise. Use ordinary language where possible to express your ideas. This does not mean you have to 'dumb down' your application or simplify your ideas: everyday language can be extremely effective when you are conveying a complex message.

- Use active rather than passive verbs
- Avoid abbreviations and turning verbs into nouns
- Keep your formatting simple
- Use footnotes sparingly and provide hyperlinks to useful information
- Write numbers, units and symbols consistently

Each funding scheme has its own specific requirements and conditions. Please read the application guidelines for the scheme you wish to apply for before you write your application. Be clear, concise and precise, and ensure that your proposal includes:

Why: the reason you are applying for funding

How: for example, how will your research be performed, or how will you use the requested equipment to deliver better patient care?

What: the items you wish the Charity to fund, for example, laboratory supplies for a research project, or training.

Who: who will do the work required to deliver your project's aims? Who will manage the outcomes?

How much: provide verified costs for the items requested. Discuss salary costs with the joint research management office; check procurement and tendering guidelines for equipment over 30k with procurement, and check equipment costs over 5k with Barts Health's capital finance team. Base any estimated costs on recent verified spending or on quotes from suppliers.

When: when will your project start – when it will end? Be realistic in these statements.

Abbreviations

Avoid. Only use if the abbreviation is more commonly used than the full version. If you must use an abbreviation, define it clearly the first time it is used.

For example, do not write PID – write 'pelvic inflammatory disease' or 'prolapsed intervertebral disc' (as appropriate).

Active and passive sentences

Active sentences are clearer and easier to understand than passive sentences, so use active sentences where possible:

'The meal (subject) **was cooked** by Susan' (passive)

'Susan **cooked** the meal' (active)

'Expectant mothers **will be advised** about childbirth options **by** the antenatal team.' (passive)

'The ante-natal team **will advise** expectant mother about childbirth options.' (active)

Passive sentences are fine where it is not clear who is doing the action, if rewording would make the sentence longer and more complicated, or if it simply sounds better:

'All dental patients should be offered an oral-health assessment.' (passive)

BMI

Use kg/m² for BMI values. You do not need to define BMI as 'body mass index'.

Brackets

Use curved brackets (...). Avoid using multiple brackets where possible. If you do use multiple brackets, use them in this order: ([{ }]).

Bullet points

Use bullet points to split lengthy text into manageable chunks.

Do not use more than 2 levels of bullets:

- Level 1
 - Level 2

Confidence intervals

The abbreviation CI can be used if defined at the first mention.

Use 'to' rather than a hyphen or an en dash, unless there is insufficient space in a table or figure. If a confidence interval contains a negative number you should always use 'to', in order to avoid confusion.

95% confidence interval 78 to 87

95% CI –6 to 9.

Disease names

Do not use initial capitals for disease names (except at the beginning of a sentence) unless the name is derived from a proper noun such as a person's name (for example, multiple sclerosis but Parkinson's disease).

Dosage

'Dosage' is dose and frequency: e.g. the recommended dosage is 40 mg 4 times daily. 'Dose' is a single quantity of a drug: 40 mg.

0.5 ml/kg per hour is correct. 0.5 ml/kg/hour is incorrect.

Drugs

Write generic names in lower case; brand names have an initial capital. Do not use a [™] or ® mark with a brand name. When referring to a class of drugs (for example, antibiotics), you may use either 'antibiotics' or 'antibiotic drugs', as long as you use the same style consistently.

Forward slash

Avoid using a forward slash as it can be ambiguous: 'patients/carers' can mean 'patients and carers', 'patients or carers' or 'patients and/or carers'. Write out what you mean in full where possible.

Do not use 'and/or'– it is often misinterpreted. In most cases, it is better (and more accurate) to use 'or' instead.

Generic name

Use the generic name of a drug unless you are only referring to the brand-named version of the drug. Use the British Approved Name (BAN) as listed in the most recent edition of the British national formulary (BNF).

Genes

Use italics for the specific names of a gene: the *BRCA1* gene.

Images

Images must be in .jpg or PDF format. Image file sizes should be under 5 mb, to avoid potential problems when uploading your images to our website.

Greek letters

Avoid using symbols: spell out words such as alpha and beta. Only spell 'alpha' as 'alfa' if it is used in the British Approved Name (BAN) list in the most recent edition of the British national formulary (BNF).

Hyphens separate Greek letters when symbols used as descriptors: TNF- α , IFN- α (but not when spelled out: interferon alfa).

Latin

Do not use Latin terms unless they are widely used and no simple English translation exists. It is fine to use familiar words such as ad hoc, vice versa, in vivo, in vitro and et al. Do not use italics.

Avoid: ibid., op. cit. and a priori, and terms such as b.i.d. (twice daily), t.d.s. (3 times daily), p.r.n. (as needed), even in tables.

Per cent and percentage points

'Per cent' is the amount of change in terms of a percentage of the original figure. 'Percentage points' are the number of units by which the original percentage has changed. For example, if the survival rate for a disease is 20 out of 100 (20%), a treatment that increases survival rate by 10 **per cent** would increase it to 22% (20 + 10% of 20). A treatment that increases it by 10 **percentage points** would increase it to 30% (20 + 10).

Use per cent, not percent, if a sentence starts with a number, for example '5 per cent of clinicians...' Otherwise use the % symbol, closed up to the number: 5%.

Sentences

Use short sentences: 15–20 words per sentence is ideal, try not to exceed 30 words. Vary your sentences. Use longer ones for detail and shorter, punchy ones for more effect. Restrict yourself to one main idea per sentence. Avoid repetition.

Spelling

Use UK English.

Avoid	Use
&	And (unless the ampersand is part of a company)

	name)
Accordingly	So, therefore
A large number of	Many
Alleviate	Ease, reduce, lessen
Amongst	Among
Approximately	About
Assist	Help
Attempt	Try
At the time that	When
Behind schedule	Late
Commence, initiate	Start, begin
Comprised of	Comprised, consisted of
Consequently	So
Feces, fecal	Faeces, faecal
Fetus, fetal	Foetus, foetal
Discontinue, terminate	End, cancel, stop
Following	After
Homeless people	People who are homeless
Hard-to-reach	Under-served
Impact on	Effect, affect
I.M., i.m.	Intramuscular
Indicate	Show
In excess of	More than, over
Inform	Tell
In the process of	When
In spite of the fact that	Despite
I.V., i.v.	Intravenous

Prior to	Before
Relevant for	Relevant to
Religious groups	Faith groups
Senior citizens	Old people
Service users/ cancer service users	People/ people using cancer services
Sexuality	Sexual orientation
Should you	If
Smoker	People who smoke
The majority of	Most
Upon	On
Utility	Usefulness (unless you mean gas/ electricity/ water services)
Utilise	Use
Victim (e.g. trauma victim)	Person
With the exception of	Except
Whilst	While