

Tips for Writing a Competitive User Proposal

- Contact the [facility staff](#) before writing. Staff are available to
 - ✓ Provide details about the [equipment and capabilities](#), including availability or subscription
 - ✓ Help confirm the feasibility of your approach
 - ✓ Help estimate and justify the amount of facility time you are requesting
 - ✓ Help address why this specific facility is the best choice to meet your requirements
 - ✓ Discuss opportunities for collaboration that might strengthen your proposal
 - ✓ Provide constructive comments on your draft proposal
- Include background information on why the proposed experiment is important
 - ✓ Include a precisely defined objective; do not combine loosely related experiments in a single proposal
 - ✓ Clearly articulate the science case: state the problem and its importance
 - ✓ Place your research plan in the context of what others have done and are doing; include references to literature where appropriate
 - ✓ State why your proposal is timely and describe what is particularly innovative about your strategy to address the problem
- Address how the experiment will make a difference. Focus on how this particular effort will contribute to the field. Describe the proposed work including samples, methods, and procedures.
 - ✓ State clearly and exactly what you are going to synthesize, measure, or calculate
 - ✓ Provide sufficient detail to demonstrate that you have thought carefully about your plan
 - ✓ Describe the techniques to be used to generate and analyze the data
 - ✓ Demonstrate familiarity with prior work done in this area
 - Refer to current literature, especially your own work
 - Summarize the key points of cited references and explain how your proposed work fits in
 - ✓ Demonstrate your team's productivity at the facility, if applicable, by describing how the results of previous experiments were used and published
 - Describe related results (published and unpublished) from work done by your group
 - Include key data in graphic format
 - ✓ Explain why you need this particular user facility and [instruments or methods](#)
 - ✓ Justify the amount of time requested
 - ✓ Identify potential showstoppers and how you plan to avoid them; if you don't identify them, the reviewers will!

Contact facility staff early— the number of requests and response time increases as the proposal deadline

Science at user facilities is diverse and reviewers cover broad areas. Don't assume all reviewers will be experts in your specialty.

Ensure that your facility publication record is current

Show you made good use of prior facility time

Be clear and specific, not vague or general.