



Budget & Budget Justification Tips for Preparing a Strong Research Proposal

The *Budget* and *Budget Justification* sections of a research proposal demonstrate to reviewers that you understand what resources are required to effectively operationalize your research project and that you've thoughtfully mapped out this important part of your research plan.

BUDGETS:

Principle: The expenses listed in a good research budget should *mirror and support* the stages and activities noted in your methodology and, if applicable, your knowledge mobilization/dissemination plan.

Tip: To develop a list of potential expenses, first list the key stages of your methodology. Then, think of all the necessary activities that enable those stages to take place. Finally, think of the specific resources (people, equipment, travel, etc.) that you'll need to enable those activities.

Example #1

Stage: Data Collection
Activity: Face-to-face interviews with research participants
Resources: Supplies to create recruitment adverts
Digital audio recorders
Travel costs to participant site
Transcription services
Personnel to develop interview questions, engage in participant recruitment, coordinate research participants, and conduct interviews

Example #2

Stage: Data Analysis
Activity: Data coding, software analysis, interpreting results
Resources: Site licence for SPSS or other analytic software
Personnel to code the collected data, run the analysis, interpret findings

Ultimately, reviewers should not be surprised by your budget request after they've read your methodology (again, your budget should reinforce your methods).

Eligible Budget Expenses

Be certain that the expenses you present to reviewers are eligible. Nothing sinks a project faster than presenting budget expenses that are expressly forbidden by the sponsor. Budgets for research funding opportunities offered by the Faculty of Education must abide by the Tri-Agency Financial Administrative Guide, "Use of Funds" section at http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/FundsUse-UtilisationSubventions_eng.asp

BUDGET JUSTIFICATIONS:

Principle: The key idea behind a budget justification rests in the name itself. You aren't simply presenting a list of expenses; you are, as succinctly as possible, *justifying* in narrative form the rationale for each expense that you're requesting.

Tip: The budget justification is a strategic way to remind and to reinforce for reviewers key elements of your methods. Provide enough relevant detail to allow the reviewer to understand the connection between the expense and the operational requirements of the project. Budget justifications can be presented in a number of formats, but tables typically read particularly well.

Example of a poor budget justification.

BUDGET CATEGORY	EXPENSE	JUSTIFICATION
Personnel	Assistant	One student at \$400 to assist with interviews.
Supplies	Paper and memory	For posters and back up. About \$30.
Equipment	Digital audio recorder	One at \$100 for interviews.
Travel	Gas	Gas for travel to sites.

Example of a better budget justification

BUDGET CATEGORY	EXPENSE	JUSTIFICATION
Personnel	Graduate Student Research Assistant	\$400. One MA GRA for 5 hours per week for 4 weeks at \$20/hour = \$400. To assist with organizing and conducting participant interviews, administering surveys, coding and analyzing data.
Supplies	Paper, portable memory	\$30. Paper to create recruitment posters for study and to print out surveys; 2 X 4 GB USB flash drives for remote data back-up.
Equipment	Digital audio recorder	\$100. One digital audio recorder at \$100 (Best Buy quote 2016-02-11) to use for interviews with elementary school teachers.
Travel	Mileage for data collection	\$21. Gas for travel by car to four different elementary schools across Greater Vancouver to conduct interviews with elementary school teachers. 42 KM over 4 trips at \$.49/kilometer (UBC mileage rate).

Tips

- **For personnel**, try and specify the type or nature of the role (e.g. MA student), a detailed breakdown of the time needed and the hourly rate or stipend, and the actual activities to be undertaken.
- **For supplies**, be specific about their purpose in the project.
- **For equipment**, supply quotes; they help convince reviewers that you didn't pull the cost out of thin air.
- **For travel**, use your organization's official per diem and mileage rates.
- **Never supply "buffer" line items.** Your proposal will typically be reviewed under the lens of "minimal essential funding," so no "miscellany." Either you know what you need and what it costs, or you don't.