Sample Template

Specific Aims: NIH

Title
The title should create a good first impression, inform the reviewer of the proposed research topic, and engage the reviewer’s interest.

Note: NIH limits titles to 81 characters (including spaces).

1st Paragraph

- Introduce the project.
  - Relate the project to the agency’s mission.
- Educate the reviewer.
  - Summarize the important knowledge.
- Identify the gap in the knowledge or state the critical need.
- Identify the problem created by the gap or need.

2nd Paragraph

- Describe your long-range research or career goal(s).
  - Ensure that your long-range career goal aligns with the agency’s mission.
- State your overall project goal.
  - Ensure that the overall project goal addresses an identified gap in knowledge and represents a step toward achieving your long-range career goal.
- Present your central hypothesis (or, alternatively, a statement of need).
  - Be sure that you present a true hypothesis – one that can be objectively tested to determine its validity – rather than a predetermined conclusion.
- Explain your rationale for pursuing the project.
  - Indicate what it will be possible to accomplish when your research is complete.
- Describe your qualifications and research environment.
  - How you are better prepared than other, equally qualified researchers.
  - Identify special training, expertise, experience, and, most importantly, relevant preliminary data.
  - Identify access to human and animal subject pools; to unique equipment and instrumentation; and to collaborations and partnerships.

3rd Paragraph

- Delineate your specific aims in a bulleted list.
  - Ensure that specific aims correlate with your central hypothesis.
  - Ensure that all specific aims relate to and support your overall project goal.
  - Provide conceptual rather than descriptive specific aims.
  - Delineate a reasonable number of specific aims, presented in a logical order.
  - “Why” aims are generally stronger than “what” aims.
  - Define a clear purpose, working hypothesis or statement of need, and expected outcome for each specific aim.
  - Make sure no specific aim is dependent on the successful outcome of another aim.

4th Paragraph

- Identify the project’s innovation, e.g., a unique approach or technology.
- Delineate the project’s expected outcomes.
  - Should validate central hypothesis and resolve gap in knowledge.
- Summarize the project’s significance
  - Provides segue to Background and Significance

Special Note

Ideally, the Specific Aims section of an NIH application should be limited to approximately 1 to 1.5 pages.

Also note that NIH now requires that applications be prepared using one of four fonts: Arial, Helvetica, Georgia, or Palatino Linotype.