

Writing your application: Tips for Applicants

The Elizabeth Casson Trust Research Grants are an important activity of the Trust to support occupational therapist and contribute to the development of the occupational therapy profession.

To support applicants for the 2024 Research Grants, we have compiled the following tips based on feedback from the review panel in previous rounds of the grants.

1. Think about the **aims and priorities** of the Elizabeth Casson Trust and make the links between them and your project very clear, but don't force the link or overstate it.
2. If there are not many occupational therapists as applicants, make the **benefits for occupational therapy** very clear, but don't overestimate them.
3. These grants are for **research projects**, not internal quality assurance/improvement projects nor for the delivery of clinical services, so ensure you present is a research project.
4. **Make it clear why this work is important**, not just in your context, but more broadly. While you don't need to present a complete literature review you should demonstrate that you understand what is already known on the topic and what the knowledge/skill/practice gaps are in this area. You can use this to demonstrate how your project will address the gaps/contribute to existing knowledge.
5. **Consumer engagement** is important in research and so you should consider involving consumers in your project – not just as participants/sources of data.
6. Describe what you are doing as **clearly and logically** as you can – remember that the reviewers will not be as familiar with what you are proposing as you are, so make it clear.
7. Make sure your application is **well written** – get someone who is less familiar with the project to proofread it and offer suggestions for clarity – which might mean making some areas shorter/more concise and using more words to explain other areas.

8. Consider the **impact** your work could have but be realistic and don't overstate the likely outcomes.
9. Consider the team as a whole and make sure the team makes sense together for the proposed project. For example, do you have someone with (where relevant) x research experience, clinical expertise, access to participants, connections with service providers, links with policy makers, relationships with key stakeholders, a consumer perspective. Think about who you need to make this a **great team for this specific project**, and make sure you have them involved.
10. If the lead applicant has limited research experience, that is fine, but make sure there is someone on the team with research experience who can provide **research mentorship** to the less experienced researchers and make this explicit in the application.
11. Be deliberate and specific in your use of **terminology** and show an awareness of the literature in the field. Although, you don't need a full literature review on Term A versus Term B, choose your term/s and use them consistently throughout. For example, do you mean activity or occupation?
12. Make sure you are clear about the **research methodology/methodologies** you are using – name them and demonstrate that you know about them. Reviewers expect to see the methodology named – e.g. Grounded Theory, randomised controlled trial, Delphi – and that all aspects of the proposal are consistent with the chosen methodology. The research questions/aims should inform choice of methodology, then methodology choice will inform data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness/reliability/validity. The key is coherence and consistency.
13. Present a proposal that is **feasible** within the resources allocated/applied for and within the time frame proposed – is what you are proposing realistic given the staffing, funding, and time? A smaller, more focused, well planned, project is more attractive than a large project which is so complex it is unlikely to be completed successfully.
14. Don't include costs that **could reasonably be expected to be covered by an employer**. For example, unless the project specifically needs a new computer, don't include one if all applicants work at a university where they are provided as standard.
15. Don't underestimate your **budget** but equally think about **value for money** and so don't overestimate it either.

Good luck with writing your application.