

From grant proposal to review article

A practical guide for researchers

Researchers who have recently prepared grant proposals often hold an underrecognized asset: a deeply researched, wellstructured rationale that can be transformed into a high-quality review article. Funding applications require authors to synthesize literature, articulate gaps, frame significance, and define impact, precisely the skills needed to write influential narrative, mechanistic, or clinically oriented reviews.

This guide outlines a structured pathway for converting a grant proposal into a review article, drawing directly on best practices discussed in the [How to Do Research and Get Published: How to Write a Research Grant](#) webinar.

Why grant proposals are ideal foundations for review articles

Grant proposals are designed to:

- Establish **why a problem matters**
- Demonstrate **command of the existing literature**
- Identify **conceptual, mechanistic, or clinical gaps**
- Articulate **future research directions and impact**

Successful grants rely on a compelling, jargon-light narrative that is accessible even to non-specialist reviewers. These same qualities are central to high-quality review articles.

A review article derived from a grant rationale does **not** simply restate a funding application. Instead, it reframes the background and conceptual framework as a scholarly synthesis intended to guide the field.

Mapping grant sections to review article components

One of the most effective ways to begin is to map sections of your grant proposal directly onto a review structure.

Grant Proposal Section	Review Article Equivalent
Problem statement & significance	Introduction & scope
Background & literature review	Thematic literature synthesis
Conceptual framework	Mechanistic or conceptual model
Research aims	Key questions and debates
Impact section	Future directions & implications

This approach reflects **logical flow, storytelling, and signposting** to guide readers through complex material.

Find out more at
[Sage Journals Information for Authors](#)

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Reframing the narrative: From persuasion to synthesis

Grant writing persuades funders that *your project* should be supported. Review writing persuades readers that *your synthesis* advances understanding of a field.

Key shifts to make

- **From justification to integration**
Replace language such as “this project will address...” with integrative analysis of what the field currently understands and where tensions or gaps remain.
- **From methods to mechanisms or themes**
Remove procedural detail and instead organize content around conceptual models, biological pathways, clinical implications, or theoretical debates.
- **From outcomes to implications**
Expand the “impact” thinking used in grants into a forward-looking discussion of where research, policy, or practice should go next, emphasizing on embedding impact throughout scholarly narratives.

Choosing the right type of review

Your grant proposal may lend itself naturally to one of several review formats:

- **Narrative reviews** – Broad syntheses of evolving or interdisciplinary fields
- **Mechanistic reviews** – Focused on biological, psychological, or technical pathways
- **Clinically oriented reviews** – Translating evidence into practice or policy relevance

Clarity and accessibility are essential because reviewers and readers may not be subject-matter experts. This is especially important when selecting a review type and framing its scope.

Maintaining scholarly rigor while adapting grant content

When converting grant material into a review article:

- **Update references** to ensure coverage of the most current literature
- **Balance citation** across the field rather than over-centering your own work
- **Avoid overstating certainty**, particularly where the grant proposed exploratory or high-risk research
- **Use signposting language** to guide readers (e.g. “The significance of this work lies in...”).

A dedicated pathway for early career researchers (ECRs)

Early career researchers are particularly well positioned to benefit from grant-to-review conversion, but also face unique challenges.

Why this pathway works for ECRs

- Grant proposals often represent an ECR’s **deepest engagement with a topic**
- Reviews help establish **intellectual leadership** without requiring completed datasets
- Review articles can increase visibility, citations, and confidence before large empirical outputs

Practical tips for ECRs

1. Start with what you already know

Your grant background section already demonstrates mastery. Refine it rather than starting from scratch.

2. Write for non-experts

Reviewers and editors may not share your specialization. Clear explanations and minimal jargon are strengths, not weaknesses.

3. Seek feedback strategically

Trusted mentors, structured writing cohorts, or interdisciplinary colleagues are often safer and more effective feedback sources.

4. Use the review to define your niche

Position yourself as the researcher who can *connect* literatures, not just contribute data.

5. Don’t wait for funding outcomes

Even unfunded grants contain valuable synthesis. Rejection is common, but the intellectual work still has publication value.

Editorial suitability checks: A low-risk entry point

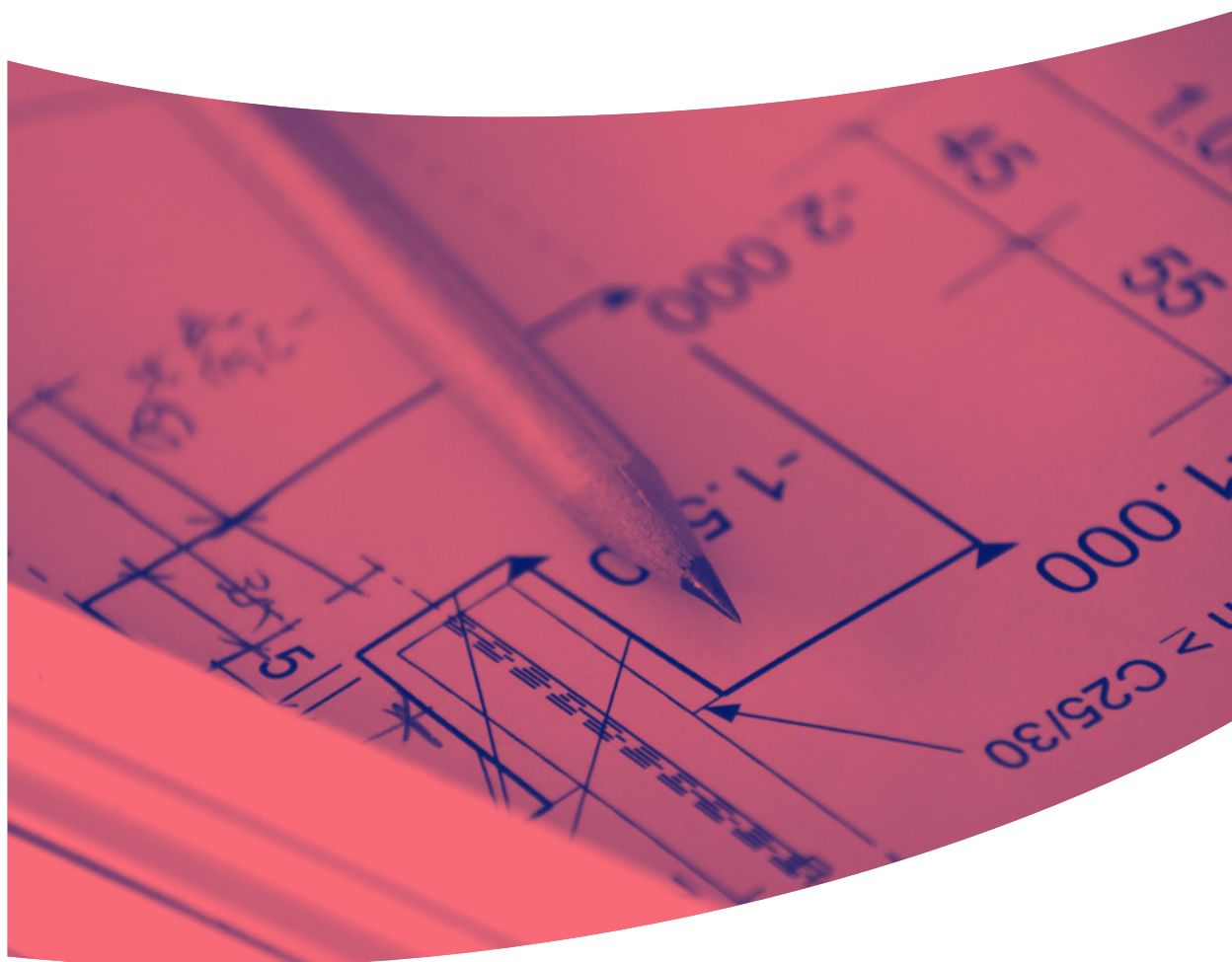
Pre-submission queries to journal editors, similar to a letter of intent, can help reduce wasted effort and improve alignment with a target journal. Authors considering converting a grant proposal into a review article may wish to send a 300–500-word outline for initial editorial assessment before preparing or submitting the full manuscript.

An effective outline should:

- Define the review's **scope and audience**
- Clarify how it differs from existing reviews
- Indicate whether the review is narrative, mechanistic, or clinical
- Highlight why the topic is timely and impactful

Closing thought

Grant proposals are not just funding instruments, they are **scholarly blueprints**. With thoughtful reframing, they can become authoritative reviews that shape a field, support career progression, and maximize the return on intellectual labor.



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