

Lights, Camera, Action: Can Video Grant Proposals Simplify Grant Funding?

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Many researchers at universities need research funding for their various projects. They usually compete for money by writing grant applications. Often, these are long documents that explain a research plan. Some researchers think that the system has room for improvement. Michael Doran is an engineer who wants video presentations to replace the typical written research funding proposals. He thinks that [using multimedia video](#) will improve the grant peer review process.

Updating the Grant Peer Review Process

Doran's idea is simple: researchers would use a 15-minute video presentation to explain their work. He thinks a video would contain more information than a typical 9-page grant application. Doran thinks that a multimedia video would help grant reviewers understand the proposed research better than the written work. He also thinks it will make it easier to identify which applications have a high quality.

Doran thinks that a 15-minute video would take less time to prepare than a 9-page document. Michael Doran will be studying this idea in more detail. He said that research into grant funding is lacking and has published his own proposal recently. There are some concerns that a video would make the proposal too simple. Others are concerned about discrimination. Still, others are concerned that only scientists with access to the best media teams would win grants.

Video Grant Applications

Doran has a team of researchers working with him. They will be using Australian grant proposals in their study. In a previous study, they discovered that about 60% of grants were awarded based on luck. Whether or not the researcher received a grant depended on who was his/her reviewer. This means that chance played a role in 60% of grants awarded. Luck decided which [scientists were given \\$458 million](#).

Doran and his team believe that a video presentation can improve the ability of researchers to explain their work. They also think that if reviewers understood more of the proposals they read, it would reduce the impact of luck. From existing data and their initial findings, they point out that videos have shown to be a more effective communication tool than text alone.

Doran and his team have published a hypothesis that switching to video proposals would improve the grant process and make it more efficient. They think it will take scientists less time to record a video than to write a proposal. They also think videos will be easier for reviewers to understand.

Doran would ask researchers to prepare videos using PowerPoint. Most researchers routinely use PowerPoint, thus making the process easy. 80% of researchers they questioned felt they could be more efficient if they applied for grants using video. 80% of reviewers said they would be able to efficiently review more grants if they were submitted as videos.

The Proposal

Doran and his team have three aims. They will test if reviewers understand and remember more of the information in a grant when it is written or recorded. Using 10 Australian Research Council Discovery Grant applications to test this aim, they will ask the original authors to create a 10-minute video of their grant application. 100 reviewers will receive either a document or a video. They will have 10 minutes to read or watch the proposal. The reviewers will have 15 minutes to complete a test to see how much they understood.

They will also see if video PowerPoint presentations lead to a more reliable ranking of grant proposals. Each reviewer has personal feelings about what makes research important. The idea is that if it was easier to review, more scientists would be willing to do it. If there were more reviewers, chance would play a smaller role. Reviewers will be asked to rank either written or multimedia video grant applications. Reviewers will

answer questions to test how they ranked each application. The questions will also test how much of the ranking was due to chance.

Finally, the team will also test how much more reliable the rankings are when based on video presentations. A review panel will be assembled to discuss the applications. They will complete a survey to assess how they ranked the grant applications. The survey will also check how long the reviewing process took for written and recorded applications.

Conclusions

This would be the first time that using video presentations in grant applications has been studied. The grant review process is a lot of hard work and multimedia video might make the funding proposal process easier for reviewers and researchers. It could be the first step towards simplifying a very important part of the research cycle. However, researchers would have to find ways to keep videos from being used to discriminate against their fellow scientists before this could be widely used.

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