



Significance Worksheet Guidelines

supplement to chapters 5 and 8 from Walker, B. L., & Unruh, H. E. (2017). *Funding Your Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences: A Practical Guide to Grant and Fellowship Proposals*. Routledge.

Your research project will primarily be evaluated for its **significance**, defined by the agencies as follows:

- NIH:** Does the project address an important problem or a critical barrier to progress in the field? How will it change the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field? Does the application challenge and seek to shift current research or clinical practice paradigms by utilizing novel theoretical concepts, approaches or methodologies, instrumentation, or interventions?
- NSF:** What is the potential for the proposed activity to advance knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields? To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts?
- NEH:** The intellectual significance of the proposed project, including its value to humanities scholars, general audiences, or both. Explain how the project will complement, challenge, or expand relevant studies in the field.

Use the worksheet to iteratively identify:

1. The 2-3 main scholarly “fields” or theoretical domains that inform your research questions, and to which you will make a scholarly contribution.
2. Other fields that might have influence but would make the proposal too complicated (keep these in the holding area, because you may move them to one of the main fields as you think through this puzzle).
3. The gaps in these fields; open questions, disagreements, new scenarios that challenge current conventions
4. The intellectual merit or significance and innovation your project will make **to these fields**.
5. The broader impacts, or technologies, treatments, services, and preventive interventions that will be generated by answering your research questions.
6. Your research question(s).

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The diagram is a large rectangle with a smaller rectangle inside it. The outer rectangle is divided into four trapezoidal sections by lines extending from the corners of the inner rectangle to the corners of the outer rectangle. These sections are labeled: 'Field 1:' (bottom-left), 'Field 2:' (top-left), 'Field 3:' (top-right), and 'Field 1 Gaps:' (bottom-left, oriented vertically). The inner rectangle is divided into three horizontal sections. The top section is split vertically by a dashed line into two columns: 'Intellectual Merit / Significance & Innovation' on the left and 'Broader Impacts / technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions' on the right. The middle section is labeled 'Research Question(s):'. The bottom section is labeled 'Other Fields Holding Area:'. The top-left corner of the inner rectangle is labeled 'Field 2 Gaps:'. The right side of the inner rectangle is labeled 'Field 3 Gaps:' (oriented vertically).