



How do you write a research budget?

Even though you will not necessarily apply for external funding, you should set up a full budget. When applying for external funding you have to account for your time with certain aspects/line items as “in kind” items – e.g. the time that you will spend on the study and on writing up the results etc. Setting up a budget is interesting as it illustrates how expensive research actually is. Each research study should have a budget to ensure that all the costs are covered: even simple research studies cost money (stationery, printing costs, secretarial help etc.) When drawing up a research budget, you must specify each item of expenditure required to conduct the study, even if the cost is covered “in kind” as above. You should also specify any additional funding required e.g. external hard drive. This helps to provide a realistic appraisal of the cost of undertaking the research.

Is there funding available for your research?

Find out from your mentor about funding opportunities, especially small funding opportunities within the Faculty (e.g. Harry and Doris Crossley Funds). There are many opportunities for funding for short-term research assistants, travel and consumable items.

Your mentor will also indicate which costs the Division/ Department will help fund.

If you plan to publish your final article in one of the on-line open-access journals, there will be costs associated with the publication. Stellenbosch University supports open access journals and will fund the proportional publication cost for the Stellenbosch University authors.

What budget must you submit with your research proposal to the Ethics Committee?

You must submit the following:

- A line by line budget on the template provided (Template 3). You can download the .xls template from www.sun.ac.za/paediatrics but be careful not to mess up the coding and formulae in the template.
- A narrative budget justification in which you motivate each line item in the budget.

Advice on how to complete your budget:

Expenditure should, as far as possible, be given in units (hours, trips, kilometres etc.) For example, salaries can be calculated against full time equivalents or per hour according to qualifications.

These are the standard categories in a research budget and each category can have many line items:

- **Personnel**

This includes all staff who will work on the study. Think whether you have to budget for secretarial staff, data capturers, biostatistician, research assistant etc.? List all staff who will be involved in the study, either as full time equivalents or according to the time they will spend in the study. This is calculated as: $\text{annualized base salary}/12 \text{ [}/\text{months]} \times \text{number of months appointed to project} \times \text{percentage effort (time allocation e.g. 0.2 or 20\% if one day per week is spent on the research)}$. If you have to appoint additional staff like a research nurse, you should consult the human resources officer regarding job descriptions, level of experience required and salary levels. You should also remember that you have to manage all the staff on the research study and define their roles and responsibilities.

- **Travel and accommodation**

Travel should be planned in advance – e.g. presenting at a conference or travelling to sites away from campus to collect data. When applying for funding make sure what the research fund will allow. Some will not fund capital equipment, travel or staff. Adjust accordingly.

- **Equipment**

The budget should include all equipment required to undertake the project and should include costs related to the research “office” (laptop, printer, extra external hard drive for storage, filing cabinet etc.) as well as those related to research work (e.g. scales if you are going to weigh babies in their homes).

- **Materials**

Basic supplies e.g. stationery (paper, printer ink cartridges, folders, pens, lever arch files), consumables.

- **Other costs**

Ethics review – At Stellenbosch University this amounts to R3000. However, postgraduate students or studies funded by internal funds are exempt from this fee. Consider communications, internet costs, rentals, honorariums, training, contracting service providers.

Also consider the following:

- o Bulk printing of questionnaires, CRFs or consent forms.
- o Translation: If consent forms and questionnaires are to be used, these may need to be translated into local languages. Costs for translation

should be calculated and included.

- o Telecommunications: Consider funds for internet charges.
- o Training: If you need to train staff for the study, include costs for a venue and materials.
- o Overhead Administrative Charges: Most institutions have a standard overhead charge that is a fixed percentage of the total costs of running the research if external funds are used. At Stellenbosch University this is 17%. For internal (Stellenbosch University or Faculty funds) there are no overhead costs.
- o Audit: You do not need to budget for this as your study is small and the University will carry costs.



Develop a budget for your proposal as this will ensure your mentor helps you find the funding for your study. You should not have to pay for it.

Gie, R., & Beyers, N. (2014). *Getting started in clinical research: Guidance for junior researchers*. Cape Town: Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University.