

UCLA

Institute of the

Environment & Sustainability



ASPIRE Grant Writing Workshop

Video 4: Background & Rationale

In this section we will



- Review expectations and requirements for the Project Summary and Background & Rationale sections
- Learn two suggested story structures to use while writing these sections
- So that you are able to
 1. identify your project's importance and
 2. communicate about your work in a digestible and moving way

PROJECT PROPOSAL

Please provide a detailed description of the proposed project as described below.

Background and Rationale* – Up to 250 words. Introduce your project and what question you plan to address. Be sure to support your statements with appropriate references. If the work is part of a larger project, please explain how

Goal and objectives* - Up to 150 words. Describe the main goals and objectives of the project

Methods* - Up to 400 words. What methods will you use to achieve the project goals and objectives? Be thorough and specific. If using a questionnaire, please provide enough details about the questionnaire to allow a reviewer to assess its effectiveness. If educating or raising awareness among communities is your goal, be specific about how that will be done and what will be taught. Remember, the reviewers may not be experts in your field. Describe what data will be collected and what statistics you will use to analyze it. Justify your methods (i.e., why are you using them, how do they address the problem, fill the knowledge gap you have identified, and provide any references).

Indicators and Outputs* - Up to 250 words. What will be the tangible outputs of the project (peer-reviewed papers, reports, evidence of changed attitudes, improved sustainability or protection). What will provide evidence of project success?

Who will benefit? * Up to 150 words. Who (individuals/communities/agencies) will benefit from this work and how? If your output includes recommendations, to whom will those recommendations be presented? Do you know they are receptive to your recommendations?

Preliminary results* - Up to 100 words. If you have some preliminary results, please briefly describe them. Otherwise, please indicate "none."

Background & Rationale - formula for SUCES



- **Simple:** Conveys the core essence of a problem in a clear and compact way.
- **Unexpected:** Surprise and delight your readers. Your background section (and overall proposal) should highlight why your work is novel and an important addition to your field.
- **Concrete:** Your proposed project should be achievable in the budget and timeline you have proposed
- **Credible:** It is important to cite your sources and ground your research questions in existing knowledge.
- **Emotional:** Engage the curiosity of your reader. Show why your work is novel and express your vision for the project!
- **Stories:** Your overall proposal is a standalone story. But equally, stories are modular. Each section of your proposal is a standalone story in and of itself.

Adapted from Schimel, J. (2012). Writing science: how to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded. Oxford [England] ; New York, Oxford University Press.

How detailed should my background be?



- What information is essential for your reader to know if they are to understand why your problem is a problem?
- What knowledge gaps does that your reader need to understand to glean the importance of your research questions?
- Remember that your reviewers may not be experts in your field. It's better to err slightly too wide than too narrow.

Background and Rationale - OCAR



- **Opening:** Introduce your background, characters, and setting. (70-80 words)
- **Challenge:** What is the main problem/question that your research aims to answer? (110-120 words)
- **Action:** This is the work you hope to do to answer the above question. (20-30 words)
- **Resolution:** This describes how the world, you, and your characters will be changed by your action (what happens when the challenge is addressed?) (10-20 words)

Adapted from Schimel, J. (2012). Writing science: how to write papers that get cited and proposals that get funded. Oxford [England] ; New York, Oxford University Press.

Background



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Project Summary

- **And** – set the scene
- **But** – introduce your problem
- **Therefore** – present your solution

Chocolate is among resources highly required worldwide and the chocolate market heavily depends on the production of cocoa, about 70% of which is cultivated in Africa. In Cameroon, previous studies integrating community field data and DNA metabarcoding provides proof that 12 species of birds (*Alethe castanea*, *Bleda notatus*, *Elminia longicauda*, *Camaroptera brachyura*, *Ispidina lecontei*, *Hylia prasina*, *Phyllastrephus sp.*, *Criniger sp.*, *Diaphorophya castanea*, *Ispidina picta*, *Muscicapa comitata*, *Terpsiphone sp.*, *Rhinolophus alcyone*, *Hipposideros ruber*, *Hipposideros cyclops*, *Nycteris sp.*, *Nycteris grandis* and *Hyposideros sp.*) consume different cocoa pests, including considerable numbers of Brown Capsids (*Sahlbergella singularis*), the most destructive cocoa pest on Earth (Babin *et al.*, 2010).

It is obvious that birds provide substantial benefit for crop production through their ecosystem services and can be used for pest's biological control in cocoa farms. However, over 68% of bird species are susceptible to haemosporidian parasites (*Haemoproteus*, *Plasmodium* and *Leucocytozoon spp.*) known to reduce the fitness of the hosts and in some cases lead to death (Cannell *et al.*, 2013; Paxton *et al.*, 2016). Recent histopathology findings showed that haemoproteids can cause severe and even lethal avian diseases due to damage of various internal organs by exo-erythrocytic stages (Duc *et al.*, 2021; Himmel *et al.*, 2021). Their effect on bird eating pests in Cameroonian cocoa farms remains unknown. Better understanding the pathogenesis of avian haemosporidiosis in insectivorous birds might ultimately contribute to improvement of health and wildlife conservation policies.

The main objective of this project is to assess the pathogenicity of haemosporidian parasites in insectivorous pest-eating birds in Cameroonian cocoa farms. Specifically, we will determine 1) prevalence and intensity of haemosporidian parasites in the targeted species, 2) seasonal variation in parasite prevalence and intensity, and 3) risk factors associated to parasite prevalence.

Adapted from 2022 awardee Mélanie Adèle Tchoumbou's project: <https://www.conservationactionresearch.net/projects/which-native-shade-trees-will-attract-pest-eating-birds-to-cameroonian-cocoa-farms>

Opening (70-80 words)



Challenge (110-120 words)



Challenge (110-120 words)



Action (20-30 words)



Resolution (10-20 words)

