8.7: Funding decision

Members of funding committees will usually have to read a large number of proposals in a relatively short period of time, and thus it is important that grant applications are written clearly and unambiguously to facilitate rapid understanding. Brevity, precision, and clarity therefore have great merit! The length of the grant application should be the minimum necessary to demonstrate the competence of the investigator and of the appropriateness and importance of the study proposed. It should never exceed the limits set by the funding agency. Reviewers will usually be annoyed, rather than impressed, with information, however erudite, that is not directly relevant to the research that is being proposed.

In reviewing a grant application, reviewers and committee members will be looking for the answers to some key questions, which are summarized in Box 8.2.

Box 8.2 Key questions that reviewers and funding committee members will consider when reviewing a grant application

1. What are the research questions that will be addressed by the proposed study?
2. Why is it important that this research be carried out? How will the study contribute, directly or indirectly, to the advancement of public health?
3. Are the applicants familiar with previous work in the area of the research, and does the study proposed build on and complement that work?
4. Have the applicants done preliminary or pilot studies that demonstrate the feasibility of the proposed research?
5. What is the research design, and how will it be implemented? Is the design appropriate?
6. Are the estimates of the impact of the intervention reasonable? Is the size of the study correct to detect an impact of the magnitude expected? Is the expected impact of the intervention of public health importance?
7. Is the time schedule for the work appropriate?
8. How much will the research cost? Are the costs justified?
9. Have the applicants considered the possible obstacles they might encounter in conducting the research and
devised ways of overcoming these?

10. Have the applicants assembled the right team to do the research? What is their track record in research of this kind? Are their training and experience appropriate?