

CHAPTER 12

PRELIMINARY STUDIES SECTION / PROGRESS REPORT

If you are submitting a new application, you will prepare a *Preliminary Studies* section. If you are submitting a competing continuation application, you will replace the *Preliminary Studies* section with a *Progress Report* that documents the advances you made during your current period of support. Because most users of this *Workbook* will be submitting new applications, we will address preparation of a *Preliminary Studies* section first.

PHS 398 Instructions for new proposals: “For new applications, use this section to provide an account of the principal investigator/program director’s preliminary studies pertinent to this application.... This information will also help to establish the experience and competence of the investigator to pursue the proposed project. Except for Exploratory/Development Grants (R21 & R21/R33), Small Research Grants (R03), and Phase I Small Business Research Grants (R41/R43), peer review committees generally view preliminary data as an essential part of a research grant application. Preliminary data often aid the reviewers in assessing the likelihood of the success of the proposed project. **Six to eight pages are recommended for the narrative portion of the Preliminary Studies/Progress**

TIPS ON WRITING THE *PRELIMINARY STUDIES / PROGRESS REPORT* SECTION

Successful grant applicants almost always have some kind of competitive advantage. One of the most important means of establishing such primacy is through the *Preliminary Studies* section of your application. *The purpose of this section is to establish that the work included in your application is feasible in your hands, i.e., that you have the competence and experience needed to do what you propose.* This section must convey that you are meaningfully poised to fill the gap in the knowledge base that you have identified in your *Specific Aims* and *Background & Significance* sections. You should highlight the recent advances that you have made, as well as the fact that technical aspects of the proposal have been fully mastered. As noted in the box, above, you need to make these points in approximately eight pages. *The fact that up to eight pages are recommended – almost a third of the total number of pages allowed – reflects the relative importance of this section in the eyes of NIH.*

If you are a new investigator, as has already been mentioned, reviewers will be instructed to place less emphasis on this section than they would for an experienced investigator. However, even though you know that you are likely to get a break here, you should devote maximal effort to making the most of the data that you have. Pull out every stop that you can. If you make a