Guidelines from proposal preparation to award

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Getting Started:

A Cartoon Tale
Idea/Need/Concept

Program Opportunity

Interaction between PI and Sponsor

Developing the Concept

Fitting Your Idea to the Guidelines

Developing the Proposal
Looking for Assistance
- Department Personnel
- DSR
- College Offices
- Colleagues

Submitting the Proposal

Peer Review

Who is your Competition?

What if You’re “Declined?”

Revision and Resubmission
Multiple Applications

Targeting and Persistence

Congratulations!
Demystifying the Grants Process

• Some common terms...
  • *Grants, contracts, cooperative agreements, task orders, procurements,* and other similar mechanisms are the way granting organizations (often called “sponsors”) provide funds to applicants
  • *Sponsors* may be federal agencies, private foundations, corporate entities, state agencies, private individuals, or a mix of these and other sources
  • *Applicants* may be individuals, for-profit organizations, educational institutions, non-profit organizations or groups, states, municipalities, etc.
Terminology

- A **proposal** is a document that describes (according to the sponsor’s specified format and requirements) what will be done, who will do it, how much it will cost, and other details.
- **White Paper** or **concept paper** - before a proposal is submitted, you should develop the ideas and “float” these by your colleagues and the potential donor.
- **Letter of inquiry** - usually to a foundation, concise but engaging; demonstrates awareness of foundation’s goals
- Proposal **formats** vary. Some may be very short, others may provide significant documentation and back-up data. The sponsor dictates the format and required content.
- The **purpose** of the proposal is to persuade the sponsor that the applicant has the knowledge, the capacity/resources, the skill, and the qualified personnel to accomplish the work proposed. Sponsors also use proposals to justify why and how they made awards.
Additional Phrases

- **BAA** = Broad Agency Announcement
- **Quad Chart** = DOD-speak for one-page summary chart (viewgraph)
- **BAFO** = Best and Final Offer - when you’ve made the cut and are now negotiating the contract
- **IQC** = Indefinite Quantity Contract
- **Program Officer** = Individual at the sponsoring agency who discusses program and technical issues with you
- **Grants/Procurement Officer** = Individual at the sponsoring agency who discusses funding, contract details, negotiates and/or assists in management of funds
- **RFP** = request for proposal
- **RFA** = request for application
Determine why are you looking for Funding?

- To do: Research, Instructional Development, Travel, Student Support, Purchase Equipment or Outreach
What can you offer as a faculty?

- Your expertise:
  - Specialization in an academic discipline
  - Experience in scientific processes and academic program planning
  - Knowledge in a specific field that sponsor needs
  - Connections with others in the field
  - Resources of your institution
What Sponsors Look For...

- Sponsors make awards according to the mandate and mission of their organization.
- They usually look for:
  - Good ideas
  - Evidence of outcome
  - Potential benefit to their constituents
  - Evidence of expertise and resources
The best way to determine if the program fits your needs is to read the program description and the guidelines ...

And to contact the Program Officer
Basic Tips on Getting Started

- Read and understand the guidelines (if available)
- Review past awardees: similar to your organization
- Develop a preliminary concept paper
- Identify the demographic and other supporting data you might need
- Establish a timeline for completion of the proposal
- Identify the primary writer and the role of the other collaborators
- Don’t be afraid to contact the granting agency and call again for information as needed
The 90% Rule of Grant-writing

- Understanding the guidelines, instructions and requirements
- Contacting the sponsor, whenever appropriate
- Developing a sound project concept, including data
- Identifying and correcting the gaps in required information
- Expanding the concept to match the guidelines
- Identifying costs
- Writing/Submitting the proposal
A pre-proposal by any other name....

- Concept Paper
- Letter of Interest/Inquiry
- White Paper
- Preliminary Proposal
- Quad Chart
Starting with a Basic Concept Paper

- Brainstorm the project to develop a framework for the final proposal
- Answer basic questions relating to the project
- Identify who will develop each section, what other information is needed, are partners required to fill in the gaps
The Function of a Proposal

- The Function of a Proposal
  - Presents a Compelling Argument for Funding
  - Represents the individual’s & the organization’s credibility and capacity
  - Describes the project in persuasive terms
  - Provides mechanism for evaluation
  - Tests the ability of the individual to articulate/conceptualize: If you can’t state it well, you probably can’t do the project!
The Essential Components of a Proposal

- Introduction
- Statement of Need/Rationale/Thesis
- Goals/Objectives/Methodology
- Environment & Organizational Support
- Personnel
- Expected Outcomes
- Evaluation
- Budget and Budget Narrative
Description of the Approach to Solve the Problem

- Identifies then modifies, corrects, improves, expands, innovates, replicates or otherwise adapts previous efforts; may suggest a novel approach that has not been tried before
- Discusses specific actions, approaches, methods
- Justifies these in terms of the outcomes to be achieved
- Provides information as to how the process and outcome will be measured
Links Between Actions to be Taken and Statement of Problem

- The problem you are addressing is always the essential element
  - Each action should link the proposed solution to the problem
  - Whenever possible, each action should also tie directly to how you will measure your success (Note: sometimes identifying the completion date of an activity can be evidence of success)
- Budgets evolve from the actions required
Who Will Perform the Work?

- Identify the persons/organization who will perform the proposed work
- Identify collaborators
- State their expertise, roles on the project, and capacity to do the work
- Network early with potential collaborators; you may need documentation from them that they agree to help in the project’s activities
When to Partner

- When the sponsor requires collaboration
- When elements of the work are being done in separate locations
- When facilities or expertise are not adequate to do all the work
- When an external evaluation component is needed
- When specific expertise is needed
- When the project design mandates comparisons
Partnering Pitfalls.... some marriages are NOT made in heaven

• Within UF.....
  • How to Connect
    • Databases
    • Functions
  • Cross College Issues
• With External Organizations....
  • Letters
  • IDC
  • Timeliness
Bringing the Elements together....How to Demonstrate Success

- **Need**: Use data, figures, substantiated documentation to state the need.
- **Specific Problem**: Use data, figures, substantiated documentation to further clarify the specific problem.
- **Proposed Approach**: Identify the methods to solve the problem in terms of previous/model approaches and how this approach is appropriate.
- **Solution**: State the anticipated solution and how you will know when it is achieved.
Monitoring and Evaluation

- Regularly required reporting
  - Who, How and When
- Two Types
  - Fiscal
  - Programmatic
- Accountability
  - External Evaluator
  - Formative and Summative
  - Self-Correction and Opportunity
Impact and Outcome

• Provides the sponsor with evidence that the project was completed
• Provides documentation of impact
• Identifies areas for future improvement
• Identifies “dead ends” – can be helpful in identifying what doesn’t work
• Describes how the outcome and useful information can be shared with others

• NOTE: Sponsors are accountable for the investment of their funds; a well-defined evaluation or measurement of outcome is important!
Identify the reviewer’s criteria

Highlight and define specific elements as priorities when appropriate

Be redundant if the point is essential....

Remember, this is a “sales tool”
How Proposals Reviewed

• Proposals are reviewed in a variety of different ways: most federal agencies use the “peer review” process – experts from backgrounds similar to the applicants evaluate proposals based on a set criteria.

• Proposals may also be reviewed by the sponsor’s own personnel, and judgment may be made based on personal interviews or knowledge of the applicant’s strengths. Certain foundation and corporate grants may be reviewed in this manner.

• At times the review process may not be used at all. Procurements issued to a specific entity may be used based on prior work done by the applicant or by the need for a quick turn-around. Usually the sponsor is required to have back-up for their decision to use this type of “sole source” awarding. Some sponsors issue a cooperative agreement or open contract to create a long-term relationship with an organization to facilitate procurement for specific tasks.
General Comments

- You are writing for the reviewers, not for a journal
- Page limits and deadlines are set in stone
- Follow the guidelines even if they don’t “flow” as you would like
- Get to know the program officer
- Try to get the guidelines for reviewers
Your ideas

- Must be interesting and understandable to a broadly-trained audience
- Clear communication - don’t get lost in the details
- Include one summary diagram or model early to highlight the problem and specific aims
You

- Don’t oversell yourself - this can be offensive
- Don’t dwell on problems
- Cite recent papers by all competitors
- Minimize conflict and confusion
  - Do not write defensively
  - Do not write when you are depressed
  - Write with a positive attitude
  - Have specific aims and objectives
Your colleagues

- Include colleagues in your proposal when appropriate to your research; acknowledge their contributions.
- Ask colleagues to read your proposal for clarity before you submit it - this includes faculty, post-docs, graduate students and staff.
- Make sure your administrators are on board.
The review

- Clear communication
- Concisely worded
- Easy and interesting to read
- Communicate the importance of your work to science, technology, and education
After submission of proposal

• Keep working on your research
• Participate in national and international meetings
• Discuss your research freely

• Keep looking for future grant opportunities
Some Final Guidance

- It often takes a TEAM
- Seek advice from colleagues, mentors
- Complete all forms and get help from the DSR
- Allow ample time for final review throughout the UF process
When Failure is Not Failure...

- Sometimes sponsors want to get to know you...your initial proposal may be a “gate opener” for discussion.
- Some sponsors have a formal structure for resubmission; they expect it.
- Peer Review and Commentary is a significant tool for eventual funding.