Grant Writing: Tips for Navigating the Giant Hairball

Based on and/or adapted from a variety of other people’s publications and presentations.
Us: COE Office of Research

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The purpose of this presentation is to introduce you to various facets of external research funding. Specifically:

- Tools and services for locating and identifying appropriate funding sources,
- Tips for drafting a successful proposal,
- Strategies for improving chances of securing external funding, and
- An overview of what to keep in mind when outlining a budget.
Locating a Program for You

Grant databases

- COE OoR’s Funding Opportunities Database
- COS Pivot
- Federal Register
- Grants.gov
- Foundation Center
# Funding Opportunities Database

## Advanced Search

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Options</th>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Agency</td>
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<td>Submission Deadline</td>
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**Search**

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## Browse by Research Interest Categories

- 21st Century Literacies
- Adult Learning
- Career Development
- Civic Education
- Early Childhood Education
- Education / Sport Finance
- Education / Sport Law
- Educational Policy
- eLearning
- Elementary Education
- ESOL
- Gifted Education
- Health / Medical Education
- Higher Education
- Instructional Design
- Instructional Technology
- International Education / Studies
- K–12 Leadership and Administration
- Learning and Cognition
- Literacy and Reading Education
- Math Education
- Measurement and Assessment
- Mental Health
- MSI / HBCU
- Multicultural Education
- Performance Improvement
- Physical / Cultural Studies
- Professional Development
- Program Evaluation
- Research Ethics
- School Counseling
- Science Education
- Social Media
- Special Education
- Sport Management
- Sport Marketing
- Sport Psychology
- Statistics
- Student Affairs
- Support for K–12 Teachers / Classrooms
- Teacher Education
- Teaching and Learning Languages
- Visual Disabilities
- Women and Minorities

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*Pivot* is a search engine for funding opportunities. You can access Pivot from a university computer or create an account to log in off-campus.
Login using your Pivot Account

User

Password
Enter password
Forgot Password?
Help

Login or signup

Access Pivot using your Institution's Credentials (Shibboleth)

Institution

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Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

1. Find the Right Program for Your Idea

- Identify the main purpose of the program: Does your idea/project fit?
- Read the abstracts of the program’s previously funded projects.
- Contact the Program Officer to discuss your idea/project and its fit for the program.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

2. Become a Student of the RFP

- Read the RFP carefully.
- Understand the main goals of the program, and how your idea/project fits into the goals.
- Understand the directions as explained in the RFP on how to assemble the proposal and all of its pieces.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

3. Develop a Timeline for Preparing Your Proposal

- Your timeline should have you completely finished at least a week in advance of the deadline.
  - Big Federal Proposals: Start *months* in advance.
  - Small Foundation Proposals: Start *many weeks* in advance.
  - Letters of Intent: Start *several weeks* in advance.

- Groovy stuff to factor into your timeline:
  - Budget and Budget Justification;
  - CVs: Requirements and formatting;
  - Current and Pending: Even if you have none;
  - Data Management Plan;
  - Appendices;
  - Converting everything to PDF; and
  - Internal Office of Sponsored Research/Programs deadlines and forms and required signatures.

Rushed preparation is obvious to reviewers.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

4. Get Help: Other Readers

- Find at least one with significant expertise in the topic area.
- Find at least one with only passing familiarity (or less) with the subject matter.
- Find at least one who is an excellent writer.

**Bonuses:** Choose people who will be blunt with you, who don’t care about squashing your ego, who are smart and crafty, and who have had success in obtaining grants.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

5. Understand the Criteria Used to Evaluate Proposals

- The RFP normally contains the criteria that reviewers will use to evaluate your proposal.
- Understand these criteria before you begin preparing the proposal.
- The criteria can sometimes give you hints about where to put your greatest efforts during proposal preparation.
- In general, reviewers evaluate each proposal according to its strengths and weaknesses, whether the research is timely and/or innovative, the qualifications of the personnel, and the probability of success.
6. Significance: A Section by Many Names

- Significance (NIH, IES), importance (NSF), need (various foundations).
- Providing background (lit review) establishes the importance of the problem, and your interesting, innovative, novel project (which will help solve the problem).
- Justification arguments: policy, practical, theoretical, empirical.
- To some extent, the significance of the problem can be identified within the priorities of the funder and/or the language of the RFP, but it is important to include that significance language in the proposal.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

7. Early Draft Strategy

1. What is the problem your project seeks to solve?
2. What data demonstrates the importance of the problem and the need to solve it?
3. What is your proposed project?
4. What is/are the goal(s) of the proposed project?
5. What are your research questions?
6. What methods will you use to answer your questions?
7. What is the population you will be studying?
8. What data will you collect?
9. How will you analyze the data?
10. What is the timeline for your project?
11. How will you know your project was successful?
12. What resources do you need? Expertise/staff, time, money, etc.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

8. All the “Things” Need to Align

- The goals of the project should align with the problem described.
- The research questions should align with the goals of the project.
- The methodology should align with the research questions.
- The data collected should align with the research questions.
- The analysis should lead to answers to the research questions.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

9. Writing/Style

- Write so clearly that reviewers steal your language.
- Use active verbs and simple constructions.
- Use abbreviations and acronyms at your peril.
- Make the proposal structure logical.
- Make the proposal friendly on the eyes.
- Make the proposal easy to skim for answers.
- Convey your enthusiasm.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

10: The Project Summary/Abstract…

- is the only section that every reviewer reads.
- is the most important section of the entire proposal.
- should capture the essence of your proposal.
- must be clear, concise, well articulated, logical—and of course, follow any guidelines provided.

Write the Project Summary / Abstract last.
Grant Writing: Tips and Strategies

Last: Commit to Resubmit

Number of grant proposals our office has submitted to federal agencies since May 2013: 73.

Number of grant proposals our office has submitted to federal agencies since May 2013 that were funded the first time they were submitted: 5.
Read the RFP very carefully:

- Budget restrictions and requirements
- IDC limits, no GAs, mandatory travel, etc.

Sponsor rules/restrictions

Check the dates:

- Recommended start date
- Estimated Funding date

Finish the budget first:

- **Budget** dictates the scope of the project

Detailed budget justification
Mo Papers, Mo Problems

- Deadlines & timeline:
  - Forms
  - Signatures
  - Approvals
  - Submission

- Checklist
- Ask for help!
On the Job Market…

• College/Department research office
  • Services offered
    • Editor
    • Grant searches
    • Pre/Post award support

• University/college seed funding

• University/college grant writing workshops

• University grant office
  • Services offered
Questions?