Grant Proposals 101

Jaine Place
Director, Research Proposal Development

jaine_place@ncsu.edu
Successful Proposals Involve:

• Planning
• Searching for data and resources
• Writing and packaging the proposal
• Submitting proposal to funder on time
What’s Your Project?

- Clarify the purpose of your project.
- Write a concise mission statement.
- Define the scope of work to focus your search.
- Determine broad project goals.
- Identify specific objectives that define how you will focus work to accomplish your goals.
- Decide who will benefit.
- Draft expected project outcomes (measurable).
Identify the Funding Source

- Grants.gov: database and submission vehicle for all government grants.
- Individual agency websites (nsf.gov; nih.gov, usda.gov, nasa.gov, epa.gov, etc.).
- Look for a match between your project goals and funder’s goals.
- Pinpoint specific funding priorities and preferences.
Identify Funding Source

- Study proposal guidelines.
- Look at previously funded projects.
- Determine maximum $ award, average size, and range of previous awards.
Contact the Funder

• Identify the appropriate project officer.
• Ask for review of your white paper.
• Find out how proposals are reviewed and decisions are made.
• Learn about budgetary requirements and preferences (matching funds, payment processes, cash flow).
Acquire Proposal Guidelines

- Usually on-line.
- RFP has specifics.
- NIH Grant Proposal Basics: [grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_basics.htm](grants.nih.gov/grants/grant_basics.htm)
- Others
Proposal Guidelines Tell You:

- Submission deadline
- Eligibility
- Proposal format and forms
- Review timetable
- Budgets
- Funding goals and priorities
- Award levels
- Evaluation process and criteria
- Whom to contact
- Other submission requirements
Before You Start

- Outline the RFP in detail.
- Make special note of “do nots.”
- Create a schedule you can stick to:
  - Meetings
  - Section deadlines
  - Draft reviews
  - Support materials
  - Vacations and other competing events
  - University internal processing time required
  - Final deadline
Submission Deadline

• Be realistic about whether you have enough time.
• Know the policy on late submissions, exceptions, and mail delays.
• Submit before the deadline.
• Find out how the funder will notify you about receipt and status.
Writing the Proposal

- Structure: Make it easy on the reviewers
- Attention to specifications
- Concise, persuasive writing
- Reasonable budget
Standard Proposal Components

- Abstract or Summary
- Narrative
- Budget
- Appendix of Support Material
Narrative

- Statement of Need (background/context; purpose; goals; measurable objectives; logical reason by proposal should be supported)
- Approach (research plan; method and process of accomplishing goals/objectives; scope of work; expected outcomes; activities; management plan)
- Evaluation plan (measurable objectives; evaluation method; expected outcomes)
Example: Mission

To develop an interdisciplinary research program to build a deeper understanding of how the human and marine worlds respond to *Vibrio* bacteria, and to tackle the global problem of *Vibrio* infections in the human and marine environments.
Example: Goals

• **Goal 1:** Investigate how *Vibrio* genomes have evolved and restructured.
• **Goal 2:** Determine targets in the *Vibrio* quorum sensing pathway to control virulence.
• **Goal 3:** Develop therapeutics to inhibit biofilm formation and dispersal.
Goal 2: Determine targets in the *Vibrio* quorum sensing pathway to control virulence.

**Example Objectives:**

- Use high-throughput comparative genomics methods for providing information to structural biologists on which signal transduction pathways are critical for *Vibrio* virulence, persistence, and adaptability.

- Integrate state-of-the-art structural biology and computational studies to examine pathways in detail and provide therapeutic targets for drug design specialists to exploit.
Answer These Questions

• What do we want?
• What concern will be addressed and why is it important?
• Who will benefit and how?
• What specific objectives can be accomplished and how?
• How will results be measured?
• How does request relate to funder’s purpose?
• Who are we?
The HOOK

• Tailors the description of the idea to the interest of a particular funder.
• Aligns the project with the purpose and goals of the funder.
• Determines how compelling reviewers will perceive your proposal to be.
Narrative

• Project timeline (visual; detailed; start and end dates; deliverables)
• Credentials (individual and institutional track records)
Budget

• Cost projection.
• Window into how project will be implemented and managed.
• Reflects careful planning.
• Includes only things the funder will support.
• Uses forms provided.
Budget

• Can the job be accomplished with this budget?
• Are costs reasonable for the market?
• Is budget consistent with proposed activities?
• Is there sufficient budget detail and explanation?
Supporting Materials

- Read RFP carefully to determine what is required and what is not allowed.
  - Biographical sketches
  - References
  - Letters of commitment or support
  - Data tables
  - Other relevant and unbiased information
Specifications

• Tailor writing to specs in guidelines.
• Respect the page limit.
• Observe format rules.
• Complete all forms.
• Edit. Edit. Edit.
Top Ten Ways to Be Sure Your Proposal Is Not Funded!
# 10  Drop the ball!

Don’t talk with the funding agency’s program officer before you submit your proposal.
# 9 Time slips away!

Do not start planning until a few weeks before the deadline.
# 8  I can do more in less time and for less $$! 

Be overly ambitious.

Project an unrealistic amount of work for the money and time available.
# 7 Trust me! I know I’ll hit on something soon.

Don’t provide any preliminary data to establish foundation for your research.
# 6  I’m the only one who knows anything about this!

Don’t reference other related studies.
# 5 We collaborate… really we do! No, really.

Show just how disconnected and unproductive your group really is.
# 4 I’m not letting anyone read my work!

Submit the first draft of your proposal.
# 3  No one will notice my font size...I get more words this way!

Disregard the page limits and font size restrictions (Arial 11 or Times Roman 12)
# 2 What do you mean, “you didn’t get all the pages?”

Ship your proposal and appendices in two separate boxes.
And the #1 Way to Really Screw It Up:
Sure I’ve read it 25 times, but I can edit my own proposal!

Don’t get nobody two editt you’re proposal!