Increasing the odds of getting those great ideas paid for!

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Grant Writing 101
Agenda

• Targeting Solicitations
• Alignment
• Funder Relationships
• Know Thy Reviewer(s)
• What Makes You so Special?
• Create the Game Plan with Timeline
• One Page Test-drive
• Know Thy Application Structure
• What Mistakes Not to Make
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Understanding who and how your proposal will be judged.
Targeting Solicitations

• What are You Targeting to Finance?
  • Discovery (original research)
  • Application (applied disciplinary expertise)
  • Integration (synthesis of information across disciplines)
  • Programmatic Innovation (systematic study)
    • Design
    • Prototype
    • Scale
  • Service Effort
  • New Collaborations
The Quest for Funding

- Office of Sponsored Programs
- Government Funding
  - Federal Agencies
  - State/Local Agencies
- Foundations
  - Community
  - Organizational/Affiliated
  - Private/(Family Offices)
  - Corporate
- Foundation Directory Online (service fee)
  (https://fconline.foundationcenter.org/)

Typically the sum of resources requested collectively exceeds the available resources by a factor of five to ten.
Alignment

• How does your Organization Align with the Funding Source?
  • Vision/mission/strategic objectives
  • Their Current Sunk Costs
  • Their Current Collaborations
  • How Often Do They Fund?
    • Their Previous Awards (who and how did these turn out?)
  • Your Prior Award History (with them and others)
  • Your Competition
Funder Relationships

• ENGAGE WITH THE FUNDER
  • Arrange for a call with the funder
  • Participate in “RFP” Call-ins
  • Email questions
  • Ask for contacts and support
  • Be sure that they understand you are sincerely intentional in your proposal/application
  • ALWAYS follow-up after awards (whether it’s good or bad news)
Know Thy Reviewer(s)

• 12/12/12
• Varying levels of expertise and interest
• What is their process for decision-making?
• Do you know any by name? Do they know you?

How will you make reading your proposal a rewarding experience for the reviewer?
What Makes You So Special?

- What is your organization's unique Value Proposition?
- How do you plan to make your funder look super smart for funding you?

In 10 words, why should you be awarded?
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Understanding how to prepare your proposal

Understanding who and how your proposal will be judged
Create the Game Plan

- **WRITING A GRANT APPLICATION IS A PROJECT AND A LOT OF WORK**
- Start by creating a project plan
  - Work from the due dates back (plan 3x what you think)
  - Include getting Letters of Support early in the process
  - Always submit a Letter of Intent if asked
    - Helps funder get the right reviewers
    - Is your proposal a good fit for the solicitation?
- Deadlines are essential
- Waiting until the last minute is not (be a grown-up)
The Problem you are Wanting to Solve

- Is the Problem defined as blatant and critical?
- Or Latent and Aspirational?
- Is there an ROI that is meaningful?

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10x Gain/Pain

How can you measure this?
Statement of Need

• For ____ (who will be affected) ________________
• Who want/need ____ (pain point) _____________,
• The _concept/idea____________________________,
• Will provide ________________________________
• Unlike ____ (main competition/theory) ______,
• The _(concept/idea) (key differentiation) ____

How can you make the reviewers heart rates go up?
Example

• For those that need to carry out the thorny job of translating innovation to commercial reality,
• the GVSU Customer Discovery Program
• will provide real-time, real-person investigation.
• Unlike just betting on profitable product-market fit,
• the curriculum-based GVSU CDP guarantees authentic market assessment, simultaneously preparing the future workforce in critical thinking skills.

Different Value Proposition:
Comprehensive University = >80% of talent produced in the U.S.
Example

• For surgeons
  • who want to reduce the 25-50% patient complication rate from esophagectomy,
  • the minimally-invasive Onesti device
  • will provide safe, swift, single movement removal.
  • Unlike the current time-consuming methods with limited visual field and tedious tissue separation,
  • the Onesti device will complete the surgery in 80% less time.

Different from Value Proposition:
Enabling the decentralization of this surgery.
One Page Test Drive

• Think About this Being the ONE THING that EVERYONE Will Read
  • Proposal Title: Make It Interesting!
  • Abstract/Summary: A stand-alone tour of the proposal
  • Check for all funder requirements
  • Then be sure to be clear on:
    • The Problem and its scope and significance (see above)
    • Your Solution
    • Expected Results
    • Impact

I like to write these like a press release!
Know Thy Application Structure

- Summary
- Background and Needs
- Program Description
- Objectives/Results and Evaluation
- IMPACT
- Budget
- Timeline
- Collaborations
- Organizations and Principal Parties

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Know Thy Application Structure

Whatever the order - FOLLOW IT EXACTLY!

ANSWER ALL PARTS TO THE QUESTIONS IN EACH SECTION!
Proposal Summary

• See One Page Test Drive!
• Your entire intention, summarized in one paragraph
• Spell out in the first sentence how much you are requesting and for what
• Can double as Cover Letter
Proposal Background and Needs

- Focus to bring reader up to state-of-the-union(art) on the topic
- Review should be thoughtful and critical; not just thorough and extensive
- How did your program/research come about?
- Should be interesting - did the reviewer learn something (i.e. do they feel rewarded?)
- Should lead beautifully to the Problem Statement

You're gaining the interest and the sympathies of the reviewers!
Proposal Description

• Hardest section to write....
• You need to clearly state how you think you know how to solve the problem: Your Hypothesis
• Then precisely what you “aim” to do to solve/test the problem/hypothesis
• Be specific about how you will implement
• Be sure that you are demonstrating keen thinking and the intention to follow some sort of process

#1 Reason for unfavorable reviews: No (or not clear) description of Hypothesis
Proposal Objectives (or Expected Results) and Evaluation

• What are you trying to achieve, or what are you expecting as results?
  • S.M.A.R.T. Objectives
    • specific
    • measurable
    • achievable
    • results-focused, and
    • time-bound

• What do you expect to learn? How do you plan on disseminating to others?
IMPACT

• What change will there be in the world if your proposal is funded?
• How will the spending of these dollars be a $10x$ (pain to gain) in 1) Discovery, 2) Application, 3) Integration, 4) Programmatic Innovation, and/or 4) Public Good?
• Can you quantify?
Proposal Budget

• Is there any guideline given in the solicitation? Or unspoken expectation?
• Match the scope and intention of the work to the budget (logical and lean)
• Have you created opportunity for matching funds?
• Don’t forget the organizational indirect
• Justification; take care to keep reviewers happy

Don’t forget your goal of a 10x!
Proposal Timeline

- Major Milestones of the Project
- Do a simple Gantt chart as a visual
Proposal Collaborations, Organization, and Principal Parties

- Who are you working with?
- What are their Roles?
- What is special about this Relationship?
  - Mutually Beneficial
  - Reciprocal
- How is this relationship essential to implementation?
- What about your Organization?
- Principal Parties; are you believable?
What Mistakes Not to Make

• Not meeting the solicitation/RFP requirements
• Budget doesn’t add up
• Using buzzwords/jargon
• Being too general; with the problem statement or with the solution!
• Repeating exact phrasing from the funders information
• Never getting to the point; don’t make the review difficult for the reviewers!
Final Comments

• Make your proposals clear, concise, and a rewarding experience for the reader
• Competition is fierce, but not necessarily more capable
• There is limited time and energy to devote to the grant preparation, which is an *ad hoc* document!
• Always resubmit if possible (after talking with the funder!)

*Make sure they can issue the press release!*