External Funding

SOME TIPS AND OBSERVATIONS

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BE BOLD. Shape the Future.

Slides used by NSF adapted for this discussion

The NSF staff is always helpful

Plan to contact them in the future

The slides chosen here help emphasize a few key points

The Budget is the Proposal

If you had a million dollars to support you, what would you try to find out about XXX that we don't already know?

Where would you spend your money:
- People (who?)
- Materials (what?)
- Resources (where?)

What question would you try to answer?

Why?

Know Who You Are Writing Proposal To

The Review Process

Merit Review Criteria

Insights of an experienced reviewer

National Science Foundation

When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits would accrue if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers are asked to evaluate all proposals against two criteria:

- **Intellectual Merit:** The intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
- **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

NSF Review Elements

The following elements should be considered in the review for **both criteria**:

1. What is the potential for the proposed activity to:
   a. **advance knowledge** and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
   b. **benefit society** or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)?

2. To what extent do the proposed activities suggest and explore **creative, original, or potentially transformative** concepts?

3. Is the **plan** for carrying out the proposed activities well-reasoned, well-organized, and based on a sound rationale? Does the plan incorporate a **mechanism to assess success**

4. How **well qualified** is the individual, team, or institution to conduct the proposed activities?

5. Are there **adequate resources** available to the PI (either at the home institution or through collaborations) to carry out the proposed activities?

What do Reviewers Look for?

Grant proposals are a very specific genre of academic writing;

Similar but not the same as research articles (e.g., not simply **blind judgement of intellectual merit**).

Important Differences:

– **Not blinded** (the person behind the proposal does matter)

– Relevance **beyond the research world;**

– Projection of **future research** (not retrospective reporting)

Imagine you had to read 50 proposals

- Reviewers should be able to easily get a sense of what the proposal is about upfront (abstract and introduction).

- Begin with purpose/objective and overview of design and procedures rather than extensive review of the literature (this should come later).

Be Helpful to Reviewers!

Make what they are looking for easy to find, using the language of the review criteria and headings to highlight the elements of the project description.

Don't assume that all reviewers will know the jargon of your discourse community or commonly used acronyms

Stepping Back on What you are Writing

Why is this project important?

What have you and others done?

What are you going to do?

How are you going to do it?

Who will do the work? What expertise is needed?

Who will provide independent (*external*) feedback on project progress and success?

How will results be disseminated?

What Have Others Done in this area?

Any other projects funded in the past by others?

If yes, what was the intellectual merit and broader impacts of the prior project(s)?

How has the prior projects influenced this project?

Google NSF Awards or NIH Awards – abstracts are there and budgets!

Work on different pieces of the puzzle, but in the end you need....

Project overview and rationale

Project goals and objectives

Summary of effectiveness and impact of prior support

Explanation of principles that guided the project design, informed by the literature [**Theoretical Framework**]

Detailed work plan with a timeline [But not too detailed]

Qualifications of key personnel who will be coordinating the project

Anticipated results

Research questions and plan

Plan for independent review of project progress and success of implementation [Project Evaluation, formative and summative]

Dissemination plan [Identify constituencies and how you will communicate findings to them]

Live in the Evaluation Nation!

Proposals should describe the main features of the evaluation design:
- the evaluation questions
- the data to be gathered
- the data analysis plans, and
- the expertise of the evaluator(s) who will be responsible for the work.

Each proposal should ***clearly distinguish*** between the role of the evaluation effort and that of other critical development or research components.

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