

Grantwriting 101: Tips and Techniques to Strengthen Applications for External Funding

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Outline of Today's Talk



- I. Grant terminology
- II. Tricks of the trade
- III. Resources at your fingertips
- IV. Mock proposal review

I. Grant Terminology

Adapted from: <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm>



Grant: A financial assistance mechanism providing money, property, or both to an eligible entity to carry out an approved project or activity; *primary benefit to recipient (limited involvement by sponsor)*

Contract: An award instrument establishing a binding legal procurement relationship between a funding entity and a recipient obligating the latter to furnish a product or service defined in detail by the former; *goals are of particular benefit to sponsor*

I. Grant Terminology



Cooperative Agreement: A variation of a discretionary grant that is awarded by a federal agency *when it anticipates having substantial involvement with the grantee during the performance of a funded project*

(Source: www.ed.gov/fund/grant/about/grantmaking/glossary.html)

Sponsored Research: Research conducted in whole or in part under a contractual agreement with one or several industry sponsors

(Source: http://www.siue.edu/ORP/ORP_POL/esr.html)

I. Grant Terminology



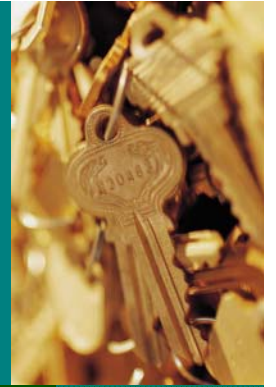
Subcontract: A secondary contract undertaking some or all of the obligations of a primary contract. Generally, at the University, subcontracts are formal collaborative teaching or research relationships with other organizations

(Source: www.washington.edu/admin/purchstores/glossary/glossary.cgi)

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU):
A legal document describing an agreement between parties; more formal than a gentlemen's agreement but less formal than a contract

(Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MOU>)

I. Grant Terminology



Request for Applications/Request for Proposals (RFA/RFP): Formal announcement by sponsor of a funding initiative to support research projects within a well-defined area. Typically RFAs are published in the Federal Register, agency announcements, or in a foundation announcement. Federal RFPs are published in the Commerce Business Daily

(Source: <http://www.southalabama.edu/osp/pdf/basicggrantterminology.pdf>)

I. Grant Terminology



Sponsor/Grantor: An external funding source which enters into an agreement with the university to support research, instruction, public service, or other sponsored activities

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

Grantee: The recipient of a grant; when a university accepts a grant award on behalf of an individual, the university becomes the grantee

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

I. Grant Terminology



Principal Investigator/Project Director (PI/PD):

A faculty or staff member who submitted a proposal that was accepted and funded by an external sponsor; the PI has primary responsibility for technical compliance, completion of programmatic work, and fiscal stewardship of sponsor funds

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

Budget: An estimate of expenditures proposed to be incurred in the performance of a proposed statement of work

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

I. Grant Terminology



Direct costs: All costs that can be directly attributed to the conduct of the project and are specified in the proposal budget

(Source: <http://www.research.northwestern.edu/research/osr/terms.html>)

Facilities & Administrative (F&A) costs: F&A costs (indirects, overhead) are actual costs incurred to conduct normal business of an organization that are not readily identified with or directly charged to a specific project or activity (MU's negotiated rate: 41%)

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

I. Grant Terminology



Matching funds: A cash commitment to share the costs of a sponsored project; in Division of Academic Affairs at MU, Deans' Council can award matching funds if required by a particular sponsor

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)

In-kind contribution: A non-cash commitment (such as contributed effort, facilities use, or supplies) to share the costs of a sponsored project

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)



I. Grant Terminology

Institutional Review Board (IRB): A board or committee organized at the university to provide review at the institutional level for ethical concerns in research, particularly regarding the use of human subjects in research

(Source: http://researchadmin.asu.edu/glossary/definitions_acronyms.cfm)
(MU's IRB: <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~irb/>)

Close out: A procedure to officially conclude a grant. Institute staff must assure that necessary scientific, administrative, and financial reports have been received, implemented and documented

(Source: <http://grants2.nih.gov/grants/glossary.htm>)

II. Tricks of the Trade



A. Read the guidelines

Most serious reviewers will compare the format and content of a particular grant proposal with the format and content *suggested or dictated by the funding guidelines*. **Failure to follow clearly stated instructions is the best way to guarantee rejection of a proposal.**

II. Tricks of the Trade



B. Network effectively to support grant seeking

Presenting papers, posters, or workshops and networking at major conferences can improve the chances of successful grant seeking in at least two ways: **establishment of formal collaborations on grant projects and name recognition with potential peer reviewers.**

II. Tricks of the Trade



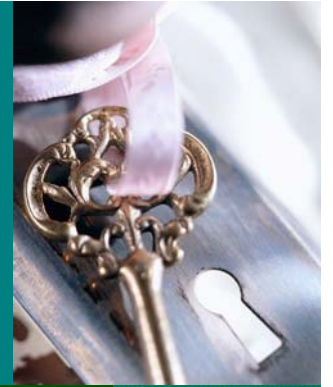
C. Ensure that proposals *clearly* address the following three key points:

Significance: Why should reviewers view *this* project as particularly important?

Originality: How is *this* project different from what other grant seekers might propose? Why should the grantor invest in it?

Feasibility: What past experience, knowledge, or publications demonstrate your ability to complete the proposed project? Does the project description demonstrate appropriate expertise?

II. Tricks of the Trade



D. Emphasize the trajectory of your research

When preparing proposals, try to keep “the big picture” in mind. If you have obtained grant funding for projects in the past, **how would the proposed project build upon the past ones?** If this is your first grant proposal, **how would the project serve as a launching point for your research or teaching career?**

II. Tricks of the Trade



E. Define or avoid acronyms and abbreviations

Unclear: PASSHE just released the RFP for the FPDC grant program.

Clearer: The Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education just released the request for proposals for the Faculty Professional Development Council (FPDC) grant program.

II. Tricks of the Trade



F. Avoid jargon

Unclear: Ryan Howard's walk-off home run won the game for the Phillies.

Clearer: In the bottom of the ninth inning, Ryan Howard hit a home run that won the game for the Phillies.

II. Tricks of the Trade



G. Use active voice

Passive: The results will be recorded and analyzed.

Active: Working with faculty members, students will record and analyze the results.

II. Tricks of the Trade



H. Avoid unnecessarily long, convoluted sentences

Alternative: Many students believe that essential course grades should stem solely from paper or writing performance and not take into account class participation. However, professors have determined that the inclusion of class participation as a grading criterion encourages students to engage more fully in class discussions and keep up with reading assignments. Use of this criterion thereby facilitates better and broader overall comprehension of course topics.

II. Tricks of the Trade



I. Use graphics to streamline message

Text: We will pursue the three primary aims of this project according to the following plan: Aim 1 (spanning the first three months of the project); Aim 2 (spanning the next two months); Aim 3 (beginning in month five and continuing until end of project).



II. Tricks of the Trade



J. Organize application to reflect guidelines

If the guidelines request a cover letter, abstract, key objectives, background, preliminary studies, research plan, and references, include those pieces **in that order**. Outlines can be very helpful!

II. Tricks of the Trade



K. Ask peers to review early proposal draft(s)

Internal review: Contact Grants Office to request assistance from a “mentor”. A list of possible mentors grouped in terms of grant type is available here: <http://muweb.millersville.edu/~grants/mumentors.html>

External review: Ask for assistance from a past advisor. Check grantor’s web site for list of recent award recipients and contact them. Request sample proposals if available.

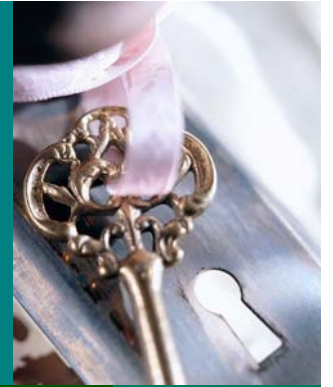
II. Tricks of the Trade



L. Obtain assistance with budget preparation

- Contact Grants Office for help with many aspects:
 - Released time quotes
 - Student wages and benefits
 - Graduate student assistantships
 - Indirect cost calculations
- Request required matching funds early!
 - Deans' Council must approve matching funds for grants submitted by faculty in Academic Affairs
 - Matching funds from other divisions require approval of appropriate VP

II. Tricks of the Trade



M. General advice

- Pay attention to the “small” details (page limitations, font and margin sizes, spelling, grammar)...The reviewers generally will!
- Use references effectively to demonstrate knowledge of subject matter and provide a context for your research
- Incorporate key terms from guidelines into narrative

II. Tricks of the Trade



N. General advice (cont.)

- Structure the narrative and budget to clearly reflect key evaluation criteria
- Use a preparation timeline that will allow you time to “shelve” the application for a week or so before making final revisions
- Allow extra time for electronic submission
- Make sure the proposal *clearly* conveys the Who, What, When, Where, Why, and How of the project

III. Funding Opportunity Search Engines



MU Faculty and Staff have access to numerous search engines, both publicly available:

- **Databases that are publicly available:**
 - GrantsNet (sciences and undergraduate science education): <http://grantsnet.org>
 - FundSource (behavioral and social sciences): <http://www.decadeofbehavior.org/fundsource/index.cfm>
 - Grants.gov (list of funding opportunities from all Federal grant-making agencies): <http://www.grants.gov>

III. Funding Opportunity Search Engines (cont.)



...and by subscription:

- **Databases accessible by password:**
 - GrantSearch (federal and private funding opportunities of particular interest to IHEs similar to MU): <http://www.aascu.org/grc/gs/> (mupa, member)
 - The Foundation Directory Online (10,000 of the top private foundations in the United States): <http://fconline.fdncenter.org/> (rsauder, muresearch)

III. Funding Opportunity Search Engines



DEMO

IV. Mock Proposal Review



Guiding questions:

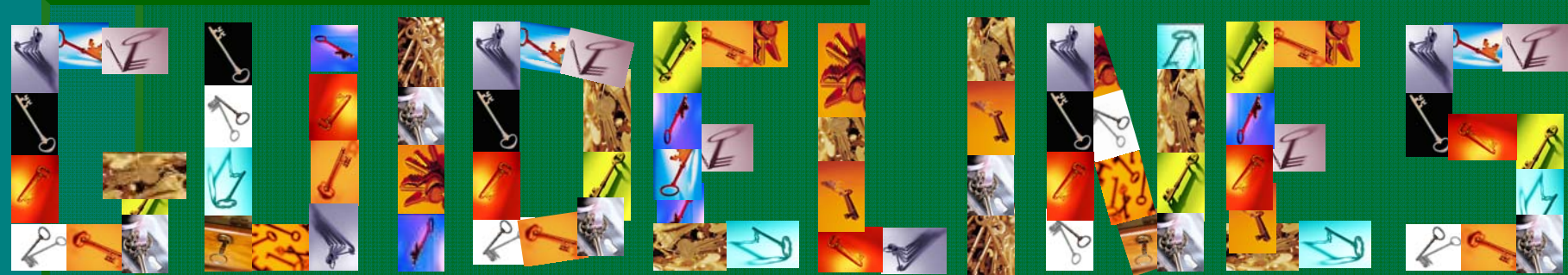
1. What is your initial impression of the proposal?
2. Does the proposal sufficiently address the RFA criteria?
3. Is the budget appropriate?
4. What changes to the proposal would improve it from a reviewer's standpoint?
5. Is the proposed work significant, original, and feasible?
6. Would you fund the proposal?

Key messages



- Search engines (public and private) are available to assist you in identifying funding opportunities; my office can help too!
- All grant proposals should convey the project's *significance, originality, and feasibility*.
- Good writing of any type requires a significant amount of time. Grant writing is no exception, so plan accordingly.
- No one knows all the answers. Ask colleagues to critique your writing; ask my office to answer any grant-related questions.

...and, most importantly:



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