Preparing Future Faculty
Old Dominion University
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Grantsmanship for Graduate Students: Getting started, finding funding and writing a competitive proposal

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Outline

- Introduction: Academia, Industry, Non-profits
- Finding Funding
- Basic Grant Structure
- Academic Writing vs. Grant Writing
- Improving your Grantsmanship
- Introduce Research Development staff and breakout into group discussions
Why write grants?

• Helps advance your career
• Enhance your reputation in your field
• Gains you recognition in your department, college and university

• Funding to pursue your research interests!
Getting started . . .

Build a “Funding Résumé”

• Develop a positive reputation in your community – professional associations, conferences
• Build a record of publications that focus on your research interest(s)
• Awards and recognition
• Foundation grants
• State grants
• Smaller government grants
• Partner with a more experienced agency/educational institution
Other Strategies . . .

Work with established, funded colleagues

Partner with researchers in other disciplines
Academia – Industry – Non-profits

Culture & mission of your workplace
Deliverables when it comes to grants
Rewards for the PI
Challenges
Finding a Suitable Funding Mechanism

Consider:

• Type of funding: intramural, program, research, training, equipment, conference etc.
• Mission/stated goals of the foundation or organization and fit with your institution’s mission
• Goals of the particular grant
• Proposal due date
• Grant start dates
• Grant period
• Amount available
• Eligibility
• Expected level of experience
Searching for funding

- **Databases** – *Pivot, IRIS, Foundation Search, Foundation Center: Foundation Directory Online, Grants.gov*

- **Professional societies** – Some offer funding and awards; they are also an excellent way to network.

- **Subscribe** to listservs at your institution, government (e.g., NEA.org, NSF.gov) and foundation websites

- **Conferences** can be a great place to meet funding officers from government agencies and foundations.

- **Google!**
  - Search with a variety of terms
  - Look at “Funding databases” at other universities too
The Importance Of *Time*

- Time to research funding opportunities
- Reading the RFP (Request for Proposal)
- Detail oriented/make an outline
- Length of the narrative + supporting sections
- Proof reading, feedback, and editing

The goal of a grant application is to be funded, so prepare well in advance and leave time for feedback from multiple sources.
The Basic Elements of a Grant

• Abstract (Project summary)
• Curriculum Vitae (Biographical Sketch)
• Project Description
  − Detailed research/program strategy
  − Goals and Objectives
• Budget
• Previous or current funding
• Resources (space, equipment, etc.)
• Management Plan, Data Management Plan
What Format Should I Use?

• Refer to the Request for Proposal (RFP)
• Follow the RFP formatting guidelines.

Make it easy for the reviewers!

Use:
• Parallel construction
• Font, bold, italics, and underlining
• Numbering
• White space
• Utilize graphics/charts
  • e.g., Gantt Chart
Gantt Chart

- Include a Gantt chart as part of the proposal.

- It shows your planning and understanding of what it will take to accomplish the project.
Obtaining a Fellowship

- Research experience beyond courses
- Well-written essays that demonstrate your motivation, creativity and insight
- Strong letters of recommendation
- Realistic research plan with
  - Specific aims
  - Methods target a significant problem/need
  - Backed by the literature
Grant Writing Perspectives

- Allow time – do not rush – do not submit subpar applications – have peers and mentors review.
- Learn from others – attend webinars – network – learn from both successful and unsuccessful proposals.
- Research funding agencies – find those that align with your work and your research path.
- Know the review criteria and pay attention to details.
- Don’t give up – learn to use feedback and learn the best way to respond.
- Time management, organization – important (prioritize)
ACADEMIC WRITING VS. GRANT WRITING
Sponsor pursuit vs. Scholarly goals

Individual passion vs. Service attitude

**Academic Writing’s Individual Passion**

• Scholars pursue their individual interests because they are driven to making contributions to their respective fields.

• However, the funding agency is not interested in advancing your career (except, maybe, New Investigator awards).

**Grant Writing’s Service Attitude**

• Adopt a service attitude: find ways to adapt your expertise to match the funder’s objectives.

• Convey how your project idea will support and/or advance the funding agency’s mission and goals and/or the goals listed in the RFP.
Specialized Terminology vs. Accessible Language

**Academic Writing**
- Academic writers strive for their work to be held in high-esteem and be taken seriously.
- So, these writers use jargon and technical terms to show their mastery of the discipline.

**Grant Writing**
- Grant writers must use language that can be understood by a diverse group of readers.
- DO NOT use excessive technical jargon.

The goal of the grant proposal is to be funded; therefore, you want the reviewers to easily understand what your project is all about.
**Wordy**

- “The objective of this study is to develop an effective commercialization strategy for solar energy systems by analyzing the factors that are impeding commercial projects and by prioritizing the potential government and industry actions that can facilitate the viability of the projects.”

**Be succinct**

- “This study will consider why current solar energy systems have not yet reached the commercial stage and will evaluate the steps that industry and government can take to make these systems commercial.”
Theme-Centered vs. Project-Centered

**Academic Writing**
- Emphasizes theme, theory, and thesis
- Draws the reader into the realm of ideas
- Funding agencies rarely spend money on intellectual exploration.
- Ends with a conclusion

**Grant Writing**
- Emphasizes a plan of action
- Draws the reader into the realm of action
- Funding agencies will fund activities that accomplish the objectives important to them.
- Ends by stating a project’s expected outcomes
Tips for Writing the Proposal

• Use active voice, first person, and active verbs.
• Write with a positive tone to convey energy and a positive attitude.
• Write short declarative sentences.
• Be straight-forward; spell it out for the reviewer.
• Be clear and concise.
• Use simple language vs. technical jargon
• Write persuasive rhetoric.
• Include relevant graphics.

The goal is reviewer comprehension.
Most Common Reasons Funding Is Denied

• Lack of original idea
• Lack of knowledge of relevant published work
  – Tip: If possible, reference the work of the review committee members. Federal funders list who will review your proposal.
• Lack of experience in essential methodology
• Questionable reasoning in experimental approach

• Unrealistic/unattainable objectives
• Diffuse, unfocused or superficial Research Plan
How novel is your idea?
  – Do background work first, literature review
Consult what has already been funded
  – FOIA request, agency or foundation websites/databases
Contact a Program Officer
Have someone provide feedback and edit your proposal
Attend workshops 😊
Many publications with grant writing advice
Key questions

Does my proposal...

- Use language and style that is appropriate to the sponsor?
- Establish my credibility, the credibility of my team, and the credibility of the establishment where my project will take place?
- Use language that communicates to the non-specialist?
- Emphasize key points with headings, boldface type, spacing, and titles?
- Identify anticipated problems and indicate how they will be handled?
Key questions

*Does my Proposal...*

- Make use of appropriate charts, graphs, diagrams, or other visual displays?
- Include appropriate references to prior research, related literature, or comparable programs?
- Provide all of the information requested by the sponsor in the required format?
- Reflect content requested in the guidelines?
What if you’re not funded?

• First, you’re in good company – it’s very rare for first proposals to be funded. The more proposals you write, the better they will be.

• If you received reviewer feedback on your proposal, read through it carefully. Ask a trusted colleague to read the proposal and reviewer feedback and discuss it with you.

• Contact the program officer and ask if s/he has any feedback or recommendations for you.

• Many grant programs allow re-submissions; do so if encouraged by the program officer! You may be funded the 2\textsuperscript{nd} time.

• Finally, remember that many good proposals aren’t funded simply because the funder doesn’t have enough $$.

• Most important... \textit{DON’T GIVE UP} on proposal writing just because one proposal isn’t funded!
Our Best Tips

1. It’s not enough to have a good idea.

2. Grant writing is the end of a process.

3. Know literature, find gap and/or problem, ask the next necessary question in the field.

4. Assemble the right team. Network.
Our Best Tips

5. Be sure your project fits within the program goals. E-mail and then call the Program Officer.

6. Allow plenty of time to plan, write, and revise

7. Develop a project time line: Gantt Chart
And finally…

Consider the **look of the page** – avoid solid text

Use illustrations, tables, graphs and visual models to convey ideas and provide “white space”

Use **headings**, sub-headings to make the page more attractive
Questions?

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