TIPS FOR WRITING COMPETITIVE PROPOSALS

RESEARCH AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT
FACULTY SUCCESS SEMINAR SERIES

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Please note that this session is being recorded
OFFICE OF RESEARCH AND FACULTY DEVELOPMENT

- We provide proposal development assistance across the spectrum
- Meet goals in the UI strategic plan – grow research and creative efforts across all disciplines
- Reach out to request service – uidaho.edu/orfd

All services are optional and are granted on a first come, first served basis
HELP US IMPROVE OUR SEMINARS

After the Q&A session: brief 3 question sli.do poll

- On a scale from 1-5, how helpful was this seminar?
- What did you like most about this seminar?
- How can we improve this seminar?

www.slido.com or use the sli.do app (Use code #FSS)
OBJECTIVES

IN THIS SESSION:

1. Tips for writing a strong proposal in all disciplines
   - Before and during writing
2. University of Idaho support for proposal development

AUDIENCE POLL: Submitted proposals before? Planning to submit in the next year?
GETTING STARTED

ASSEMBLE YOUR TEAM & TIMELINE

- **Writers and architects** (Co-PIs, senior personnel, postdocs, etc.)
- **External Partners** (e.g., research archivists, school districts, etc.)
- **Consultants** (Facility core leaders, external evaluators, graphic designers, etc.)
- **Research Administrators** (SPA, DGA, external grants specialists)
- **Development Specialists** (editors, organizers, proposal experts)
- **Advocates/Approvers** (Department head, institute directors)
- **Mentors** (successful PIs, graduate advisors, colleagues)
- **Other** – external reviewers, accountability partners, etc.

- **Timeline** – 2-3 month proposal development process, weekly meetings
GETTING STARTED

PRE-PROPOSAL PREP:

1. Read (and reread) the RFP/RFA/BAA/solicitation
   - Eligibility, keywords, areas of interest, budgetary restrictions, preparation guidelines

2. Read funded proposals

3. Contact your Program Officer
   - At least 2-6 months ahead of proposal deadline
   - Develop a one-page project overview
   - Send a brief email requesting a phone conversation about your overview
   - Follow up phone conversation – *listen carefully!*

4. Budget & budget justification – *do this EARLY*

5. Write the proposal.
FIND TIME TO WRITE

TIPS:

1. When do you write?
2. Collect strategies from successful proposal writers and mentors
3. Schedule regular time to write on your calendar
   • STICK with this
   • Limit distractions
   • Find what works for you
4. Find accountability partners*

*National Center for Faculty Development & Diversity
CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

SPONSOR PERSPECTIVE:

1. Understand sponsor mission and review criteria
2. Read abstracts of previously funded projects
3. Solicitation specifics
   - Keywords and phrases – use these!
4. Your project must align with and enhance the sponsor’s goals/mission
   - It is your job to demonstrate this alignment to the funder
   - NOT a manuscript - sales pitch
   - What’s in it for them(not you)?
5. Most challenging part of proposal development – requires a new set of skills
CONSIDER YOUR AUDIENCE

REVIEWER PERSPECTIVE:

- **Peers (?)**
  - Potentially varying backgrounds
  - Proposal needs to be understood by an educated individual who isn’t necessarily an expert in your field
  - But! You also need to provide the details that experts in your field will expect to see

- **Volunteers**
  - Consider their state of mind...
WRITING A REVIEWER-FRIENDLY PROPOSAL

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

1. This first page of the proposal is critical – needs to be well-organized.
2. Purpose: get reviewer interested in the problem and present your central idea.
3. Describe landscape of your field – be sure to be up-to-date!
   - What is the knowledge gap you are looking to address?
   - Significance – what is not being done because of this gap?
4. How are you/your team positioned to fill this gap and advance the agency mission?
5. Need to clearly present what you plan to do, why and how.
WRITING A REVIEWER-FRIENDLY PROPOSAL

PROJECT OVERVIEW CONT’D:

Set up the Problem
- What do we know? What don’t we know? What should be done about it?

Present the Solution
- Present overall objective and general approach to tackle the problem
- Why should you be the one to do it? Steps taken? Previous work? Prelim. data?

Aims, Goals, Specific Objectives
- Goals – Reflect significance, why do this project
- Aims – Reflect direction and intent
- Objectives – Describe what will happen in the project

Impact – Explain the significance of the problem and impact on the field
WRITING A REVIEWER-FRIENDLY PROPOSAL

PROJECT OVERVIEW – OPENING SENTENCE:

1. NOT a widely known fact
2. “Hook” for reader to stay engaged and keep reading
   - What problem or knowledge gap is this proposal addressing?
   - What is the importance of addressing the problem or knowledge gap?
OPENING SENTENCE EXAMPLES

The Wasatch fault line extends 3,000 miles across the state of Utah.

OR

Improving methods for predicting earthquake activity along the Wasatch fault line is critically important to the 2,000,000 residents living in these earthquake risk zones.
WRITING A REVIEWER-FRIENDLY PROPOSAL

USE OF PAGES AND SPACE:

Create a pleasing reading experience for the reviewer through the use of:

- White space
- Font size
- Signposts – headings and subheadings
- Figures and tables
WRITING A REVIEWER-FRIENDLY PROPOSAL

TIPS ON FIGURES:

Role of figure legends
- In a manuscript – Reader makes conclusion
- In a proposal – Author presents conclusion

Figure 1. Estrogen families can be distinguished on the basis of chemical structure, estrogenicity (e.g., binding affinity; y-axis), and hydrophobicity (e.g., KOW; x-axis)
MORE THAN THE NARRATIVE

ORGANIZATION AND FORMAT:

Use guidelines as template for organizing, when applicable
- Outline
- Headings and subheadings
- Required tables and figures

Other documents
- These have to also be meaningful, well-organized, and perfectly formatted
- Examples: biographical sketches, bibliography, data management plans, facilities and other resources, logic models, postdoc mentoring plans
  - Agency-specific formatting
  - Team proposals – all documents should be identically formatted
BEAT THE CLOCK

TIPS FOR TIME MANAGEMENT:

1. If your program has a deadline, things to consider
   - U of I review process – back up deadline by 5-7 business days
   - Office of Sponsored Programs reviews proposals to external sponsors
   - Internal departmental and college approvals are part of the process
   - Proposal submission system: Vandal Electronic Research Administration System (VERAS)

2. Know your Pre-Award Sponsored Program Administrators
3. Know your Departmental Grant Administrators and their roles/responsibilities

4. Begin your proposal entry into VERAS as soon as possible!
RFD PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

SIX LEVELS OF SERVICE:

- Level 1 - Funding Opportunity Search
- Level 2 - Developing a Concept Paper and Contacting Program Officers
- Level 3 - Resubmission Staging
- Level 4 - Proposal Narrative Review
- Level 5 - Proposal Package Review
- Level 6 - Support for Large Interdisciplinary Proposals (Budgets >$1M)
RFD RESOURCES

HOW TO GET STARTED:

1. Request proposal development services
2. Access proposal development resources
   • Sponsor checklists, templates, guides
3. Find funding with Pivot
4. Meet with RFD specialists
5. Attend RFD faculty seminars & workshops

https://www.uidaho.edu/research/about/orfd
FACULTY SUCCESS SEMINARS
Let Us Be Your Guide Through the Proposal Development Process

JOIN US IN IRIC 305
12:30 P.M. – 1:30 P.M. PT

Can’t join us in person? Then join us live via Zoom: uidaho.zoom.us/j/798224314. Each seminar will be recorded and be available on our website.

University of Idaho
Office of Research and Faculty Development
**FALL 2019**

- **Sept. 4**  HERC IGEM Info Session
- **Sept. 11** Find Funding Opportunities: Intro to Pivot
- **Sept. 25** NSF CAREER All Year: An Introduction
- **Oct. 2**  W.M. Keck Foundation Info Session
- **Oct. 16** Tips for Successful Proposal Writing
- **Oct. 23** NSF CAREER All Year: Getting Started
- **Oct. 30** Exploring Humanities Funding Opportunities
- **Nov. 13** MW CTR-IN Funding Opportunities
- **Nov. 20** NSF CAREER All Year: Integrating the Research and Education Plans
- **Dec. 11** M.J. Murdock Trust Commercialization Initiation Program Info Session

**SPRING 2020**

- **Jan. 22** Developing Successful Project Management Plans for Large Proposals
- **Feb. 5**  NSF: Broader Impacts Really Do Matter!
- **Feb. 12** NIH: Funding Mechanisms Overview (R03, R21, R01)
- **Feb. 19** NIH: Developing Your First RO1 Proposal
- **Mar. 4**  NIH: Understanding Proposal Review
- **Mar. 11** NSF: Understanding Proposal Review
- **Mar. 25** Fulbright Faculty Scholar Program Info Session
- **Apr. 1**  Find Funding Opportunities: Intro to Pivot
- **Apr. 8**  NSF MRI: Creating Competitive Proposals

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**WE GUIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMPETITIVE EXTERNAL GRANT PROPOSALS**

Office of Research and Faculty Development

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BROADER IMPACTS 101:
A Workshop on the National Science Foundation’s Broader Impacts Criterion

Presented by Dr. Jory Weintraub, BI Trainer for the NSF-funded Center, Advancing Research Impact in Society

Wednesday, November 6, 2019 | 8:30 am—12:30 pm PT
Horizon Room, 4th floor Idaho Student Union Building

Reservations are required
Please reserve here
(https://bi-101-workshop.eventbrite.com)

The National Science Foundation requires that all proposals substantially address the broader impact (BI) of research. This free workshop is designed for faculty members considering applying for funding from NSF and who wish to increase the competitiveness of their proposals. Participants will learn strategies for conceptualizing, designing, implementing, and evaluating BI activities.

Co-sponsored by the University of Idaho, Idaho EPSCoR, and Washington State University

For more information contact U of I Office of Research and Faculty Development | ored-rfdteam@uidaho.edu | (208) 885-1144
TAKE HOME MESSAGES

We Are Here To Help
THANK YOU FOR COMING!

QUESTIONS?

BEFORE YOU GO...

Please take a brief 3-question sli.do poll

www.slido.com or use the sli.do app

Use code #FSS