Grant Writing 101: The Basics of Proposal Development and Getting a Proposal Submitted

Research Enhancement Workshop Series: Sponsored by the Office of Research and Economic Development

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Goals for this Workshop

1. Enhance proposal development skills

   1. Articulating the components of your project
   2. Packaging the proposal into a cohesive and unified whole

2. Enhance your familiarity with the process of getting it out the door

   1. Budgeting
   2. Office of Sponsored Programs Review Process
   3. Grants.gov

3. Outline common features of unsuccessful proposals

Broad Overview of Process

Identify Funding Opportunity	Develop Proposal	Get it Approved and Submitted to Sponsor
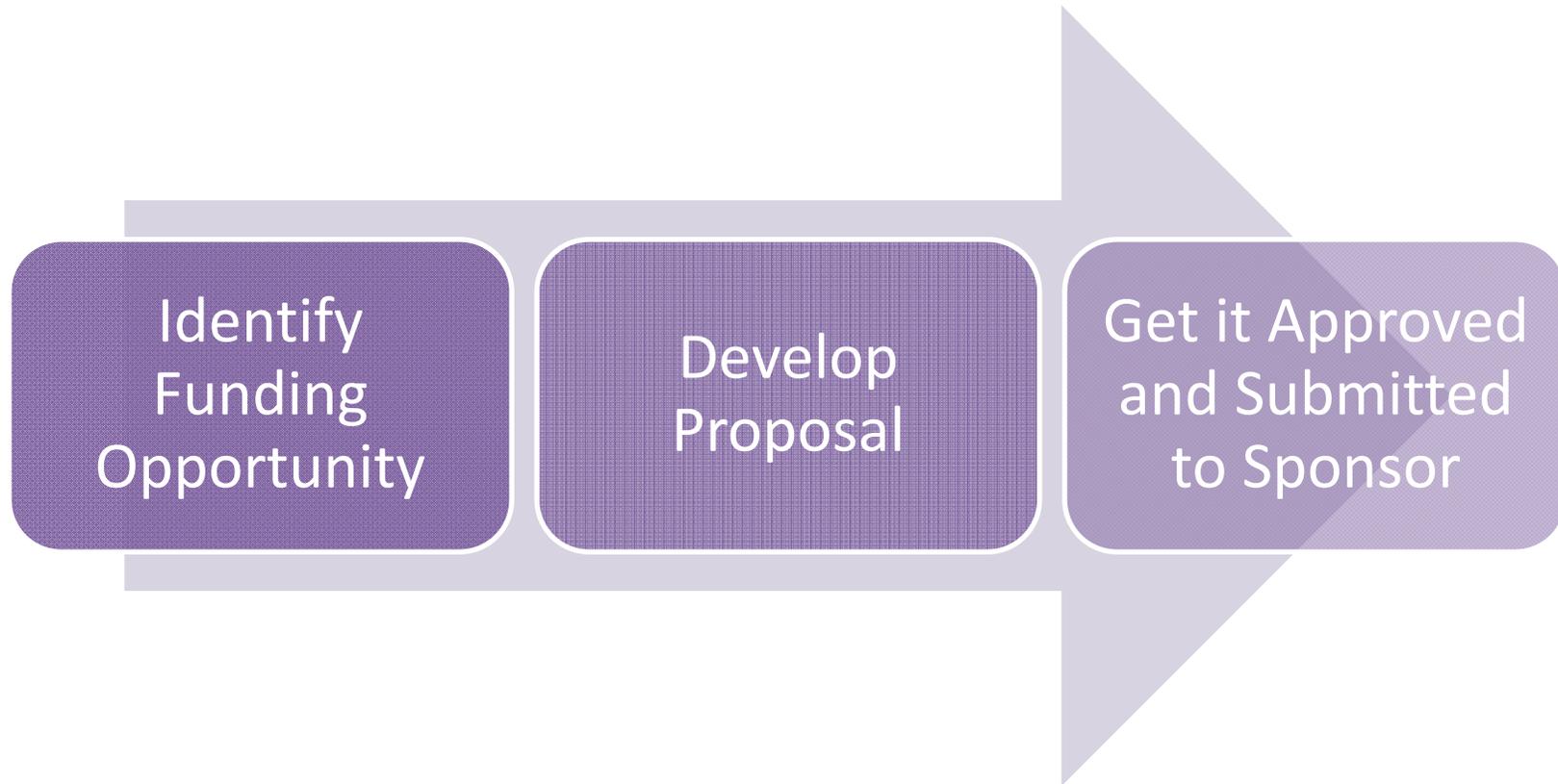
Proposal Development: Basic Elements

- Abstract / Project Summary

- Project Description / Narrative
  - Problem Statement
  - Goals / Objectives
  - Background and Significance
  - Approach / Design / Methods
  - Outcome / Evaluation / Dissemination
  - Personnel / Management Plan
  - Organizational Resources

- Budget

Abstract / Project Summary

- What is it?
  - Short, self contained statement describing the larger project

- In some respects, can be the most important part of the package: everyone reads it, and reviewers frequently refer back to it

- Final version should be written after the rest of the proposal is completed

Abstract / Project Summary: What to Include

- Most abstracts will include some version of the following:
  - General purpose (what the project is about)
  - Goals and / or objectives (abstract versus measurable outcomes)
  - Research design
  - Methods
  - Significance

Abstract / Project Summary: Other Considerations

- National Science Foundation requires Project Summaries to explicitly address

  – Intellectual Merit

  – Broader Impacts

Project Description / Narrative

- Statement of
  - What you want to do
  - Why its important
  - How you will do it

Problem Statement

- Clearly identify the specific problem you are proposing to address;
- Make sure that the problem is stated in a way that is responsive to what the funder wants to provide funding for;
- Describe importance of problem;
- Include a long-tem objective for what you are trying to accomplish;
- Include significant data to support your claim about the problem;
- This section is usually fairly brief;

Goals/Aims/Objectives

* Sometimes goals and aims are included in a larger section, after the background and significance is discussed; other times it is a stand alone section with specific instructions;

* Generally written as a short overview of the purpose and goal of the project, followed by bulleted, concise delineation of objectives;

* Objectives are active; they succinctly say how you will accomplish your goal:
    Ex. Youth violence will be reduced through education, reduction in access to firearms and victim offender mediation services.

* Presented in a very readable, precise manner.

* Activities necessary to achieve objectives are generally written in the approach, design or methods section; they provide the details of what you will actually be doing to achieve the objective and reach the goal.

Background and Significance

- Preliminary data, if required

- The point of this section is to help the reviewer understand the intricacies of the problem you are trying to address;

- If your RFP requires preliminary data, this is the section where you discuss that;

- Use language non-experts can understand;

- This is an organized literature review that shows what has been done to address the problem and why your proposed work will fill significant gaps in the research and what we know;

- Your preliminary data should be discussed with other literature that has attempted to fill a knowledge gap;

- Link preliminary data to activities you are proposing- like the next steps to be taken.

Approach/Design/Methods

- Provides a detailed plan as to how each objective will be met;

- This is a very logical presentation of what you plan to do to accomplish the goals and objectives that you have identified;

- It is the research plan, with timeline and, sometimes, a logic model.

- This section may include evaluative plans, but that also may be included in an additional, separate section;

Approach (cont'd)

- Must describe methods fully and provide a rationale for your choice of methods, explaining why the method you have chosen will bring the desired results;

- Some RFP's ask that you include potential problems or barriers in using the methods you have selected, so be prepared to offer a Plan B if Plan A doesn't work;

- This section may include the staffing and personnel section or that may be a separate section;

- All of these parts must link- from what you say you are going to do, how you will do it, who will do it and how much is it going to cost.

Outcomes/Evaluation/ Dissemination

- If the approach section does not include evaluation of outcomes, a following section will require this;

- Every funder wants to know how you plan to measure what you have done towards reaching the proposed outcomes;

- Generally, a process and outcome type of evaluation is required so that you address whether the way you proposed to implement the project has worked and, if so, has it produced the desired outcomes?;

- Funders are generally interested in not only why you have reached the proposed outcomes, but why you may <u>not </u>have reached the outcomes you proposed.

Outcomes (cont'd)

- Often , a barrier to effective research is as important as why the research has worked;

- In addition to evaluating your results, the funder will want to know what methods you will use to *disseminate* your findings;

- This can involve website development, academic articles and presentations and other creative ways to circulate your results;

- Sometimes, depending on the project, the funder will want a manual detailing how you have conducted the research so it can be replicated – that is one reason that the details are so important.

Personnel

- The description of personnel may be required in one of several sections in the proposal;

- The main point is that the people listed and their scope of work must fit hand in hand with the work to be undertaken;

- Experience, qualifications and interdisciplinary experience are generally important.

- % of effort for each person is also very important in your decision making.

- Having someone on your team who has previously received funding from the agency you are applying to can be very helpful.

Organizational Resources

- At some point, you will be asked to describe the resources your organization has to support your work;

- This is important because the funder wants to make sure you are supported by your employer and that things like space, equipment , buy-out, GA support will be made available to you.

Budgets

* Thanks to Darya Courville, Interim Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, for the information in this section

- ## Direct Costs
  – Costs that can be identified specifically with a particular sponsored project, instructional activity, or any other institutional activity

- ## Indirect Costs/Facilities and Administrative Costs
  – Costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives that cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity

Budgets

- Common Budget Categories
  - Salaries and wages
  - Fringe benefits
  - Travel
  - Supplies
  - Professional Services
  - Subcontractors
  - Other direct costs
  - Equipment
  - Facilities and Administrative costs

Budgets

- ## Subaward Requirements
    - Budget and Justification
        - Ensure that the subaward budget is reviewed and approved by the subrecipient's authorized institutional representative
        - Subrecipient's current fringe benefits and F&A rates must be used
        - If there is an F&A rate restriction, it will also apply to the subaward budget
    - Letter of collaboration or budget form signed by subrecipients Authorized Institutional Representative
    - Scope of Work (either separate or separately identifiable in the proposal)

Budgets

Facilities and Administrative Rates

Applied to MTDC		Non-State Agency	State or Local Gov.
Research	On Campus	48%	24%
	Off Campus	26%	13%
Instruction	On Campus	49%	24%
	Off Campus	26%	13%
Public Service	On Campus	36%	18%
	Off Campus	26%	13%

Budgets

Fringe Benefit Rates

36% regular salaried employees

7.65 % Contingent labor / transient employees

Cost Sharing / Matching

- Cost sharing and matching are defined as that portion of sponsored project costs not borne by the sponsor. When the University shares in the costs of a sponsored project, it generally does so by committing the effort of the University personnel to a project without charging the project for those costs

- OMB Circulars A-21 and A-110 require that all cost sharing and matching on sponsored projects be properly documented in the University's accounting records

- LSU HAS A POLICY THAT DOES NOT ALLOW VOLUNTARY COST SHARING!

- Normally budgeted in salaries and wages, related fringe, and F & A

Internal Review: Meet OSP and SPS

* Thanks to Darya Courville, Interim Director, Office of Sponsored Programs, for the information in this section

- ## OSP: Office of Sponsored Programs
  - unit through which proposal routing, approval and submission take place

- ## SPS: Sponsored Programs System
  - Web based system used for proposal routing and approval; access it via PAWS

Internal Review

- All proposals must be routed through SPS

- Documents must be uploaded; proposal is assigned an internal number

- Required reviewers get notice when it is available

- OSP is given access to review

Internal Review

- OSP requires at least 3 full days for processing and review

- There are 2 types of review

  - **Streamlined**: SPS coversheet and investigator info; budget and justification; sponsor forms which contain budgetary info or institutional signature

  - **Expanded**: all of the above; complete proposal; check for adherence to sponsor requirements

Getting Ready to Submit

- Most, but not all, submissions are now done electronically.

- Some require PI to submit

- Some require institution to submit (OSP)

- All still should be routed through SPS for OSP review

Common Problems with Unsuccessful Proposals

- Not aligned with the needs or interests of the agency
- Not following the instructions to the letter
- Question not well formed
- Outcome is not clear/problem is not explained
- Lack of logical thought
- Insufficient technical details
- Missing big picture
- Minor errors (shows lack of attention to detail)
- Work is completed or near completion
- Doesn't require funding
- Project doesn't fit time constraints
- Lots of others

Good Luck!

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