

Tips on Grant Proposal Development

1. Don't wait for the Request for Proposals to be released. Think through (and put on paper) your approach and needed partners now.
2. Think of yourself as a Grant *Compiler, Coordinator, or Developer*, rather than as a Grant *Writer*. Grant writing is as much about knowing what all needs to go in the grant, where to find the information, and how to compile it in the best way, as it is about actual writing. Writing skills are important but other/organizational skills are needed as well.
3. Make a plan for compiling the grant, which includes delegating pieces to others and a schedule for when you and others need to have each item completed.
4. Set up your project schedule by working backward from your due date, leaving 2 weeks to ask OSP and/or a colleague to do a mock grant review (not counting internal budget review and routing for signatures).
5. If you are the lead grant "writer" on the team, you are responsible for knowing everything that is in the program announcement. Read every word and highlight whatever you need to in order to find key items again (e.g., dates, addresses, special instructions, etc.)
6. Make sure that what you are proposing is a very good match with what the funder is interested in funding, and make sure the grant reflects that whenever possible. (One cannot really say whether a grant is good, e.g., fundable, without reference to the program announcement to which you are responding.)
7. Have at least one conversation with the Project Officer to solicit feedback on your project idea and ask any specific questions that have arisen. The fact that you took the time to make contact will provide you an additional leg up.
8. Determine your "hook". Your hook is the description of your idea tailored to the interest of the funder. This critical component will determine how compelling your proposal is in the reviewers' eyes.
9. Don't make promises you can't keep, or exaggerate your qualifications. Do use succinct, unequivocal statements on merits and qualifications.
10. If you're weak in a given area, recruit a partner who has that skill or resource. Don't just leave it out or wish it were better. EVERY point is needed to get a high score.
11. Don't pad the budget. Do take the time to plan each component so you can budget the details. It will strengthen your grant while making your budget more realistic. In most cases, you should be asking for (and needing) as much funding as is available.
12. Organize the grant exactly as the funder has instructed, using the same outline and headings (although they can be abbreviated). If the same information appears to be requested in more than one place, but you are short on space, refer to the initial page by number specifically.
13. In fact, follow all of the instructions! Don't skip some because they seem stupid or unimportant.
14. Avoid ambiguity. If you exhibit clarity in writing, your reviewers will have it when rating you. If you are not successful in this round, they will not be confused when telling you how to improve.
15. No grant should ever be written for naught. You can obtain reviewer feedback and resubmit next year or use components of the text for a different funding opportunity that may better align with the objectives of the funder.
16. Get a jumpstart today by developing aspects of standard grant components: your biography, organizational history, mission statement, etc. Keep these on file.

Your Every Research/Outreach Wish Granted: Writing a Successful Proposal

“Money’s a horrid thing to follow, but a charming thing to meet.”—Gilbert Osmond

The following are common elements of a grant proposal:

- Abstract
- Introduction
- Problem/Need Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Methodology
- Evaluation
- Qualifications/Expertise
- Budget
- Appendices

Due to limited time, we will focus today on two critical components of a successful grant proposal: Problem/Need Statement, and Goals and Objectives.

Problem/Need Statement

It is imperative that you include a well-documented statement of the need/problem on which your research/outreach idea is based. This is going to be your “hook”? Only information based on objective research, not subjective impressions, should be provided to justify the need or problem. You should make a compelling case, but back it up with data.

- The need statement should resolve these questions:
- What are the pressing problems/needs that you want to address?
- How is what you are proposing different than anything done before?
- What other sources confirm these as major needs?
- Why is a grant necessary to address this problem?
- Why are you and/or your organization uniquely suited to conduct the project?

Use several of the following persuasive techniques in your statement of need:

- Employ facts or statistics to support your assertions
- Provide hopeful resolution to the need
- Identify the project as a potential model for replication elsewhere
- Assert how you or your program are better qualified to conduct this research/outreach than others in the field
- Discuss how the proposed project will increase the knowledge base in a particular field, provide valuable information, or advance the mission of the funding organization

Goals and Objectives

This section of the proposal describes the outcomes of the grant in measurable terms. It is a succinct description of what the organization proposes to accomplish. What is the *general* goal of your project? What are the *specific*, measurable objectives that support this goal? Think of objectives as "outcomes" that define your activities. Tell *who, what, and when*. Your objectives should be achievable within the proposal's timeframe and include four types: behavioral, performance, process, and product.

- **Behavioral** - A human action is anticipated.
Example: Thirty entrepreneurs will learn how to start their own business.
- **Performance** - A specific time frame within which a behavior will occur.
Example: Twenty entrepreneurs will start or expand a business within the first two years.
- **Process** - The manner in which a grant is implemented can be a result in itself.
Example: We will document which of the entrepreneurship delivery methods best serves the most people.
- **Product** -- A tangible item results.
Example: An entrepreneurship delivery system manual will be produced and disseminated.

Clearly stated goals and objectives will tie into your program evaluation, and ultimately determine the success of a proposal. Ensure that there is considerable overlap between your goals and objectives and the goals and objectives of the funding organization.

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION – special faculty research support

Faculty Early Career Development (CAREER) Program

Eligibility: Faculty in tenure track positions (but not yet tenured), w/doctoral degree (by July due date), must be assistant professor, applying to one of various directorates within NSF. Permanent US residency or citizenship not required.

Areas of study: Any of the NSF directorates, including all of the sciences, math, engineering, computer science, social and behavioral sciences, political science, and economics.

Amount & Duration. Minimum, including indirect costs, will total \$400,000 for the 5-year duration with the following exception. Proposers to the Biological Sciences Directorate (BIO) must submit budget requests for a minimum of \$500,000 for the 5-year duration.

Next Due Dates: July 18, 19, 20th, depending on Directorate.

Purpose: “To support the early career development activities of teacher-scholars who most effectively integrate research and education within the context of their organization”.

This premier program emphasizes the importance the Foundation places on the early development of academic careers dedicated to stimulating the discovery process in which the excitement of research is enhanced by inspired teaching and enthusiastic learning. Effective integration of research and education at all levels generates a synergy in which the process of discovery stimulates learning and assures that the findings and methods of research are quickly and effectively communicated in a broader context and to a larger audience.

The CAREER program embodies NSF’s commitment to encourage faculty to practice, and academic institutions to value, integration of research and education. Successful PIs will propose creative, integrative, and effective research and education plans, developed within the context of the mission, goals and resources of their organization, and which will build a firm foundation for a lifetime of contributions to the integration of research and education.

They even mention how much they value predominately undergraduate institutions.

The most meritorious of the CAREER applicants get picked to receive a Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) award.

RIG and CAA grants for under-represented groups in the Biological Sciences.

RIG-Research Initiation Grants, for faculty, "usually" in their first academic appt, who have never been a PI or Co-I on a federal grant. CAA are Career Advancement Awards for faculty who may have had a federal grant before who want to develop a new tool or skill. The point of this program is to increase the involvement of people who are under-represented in the bio sciences, first by supporting the career development of faculty who are women, minority, or disabled, and then secondly through the ripple effect of those folks involving under-represented students to get involved and mentoring other under-represented faculty themselves. So, actually, those are the two main requirements: being from an under-represented group and being in the bio sciences. Grants on this one are for \$ 150,000 over 2 years, with possible additional \$ 25,000 for equipment. The RIG will not pay for Co-Is, the CAA will. Next due date is **July 12th**.

Call Anita (3-6148) at Sponsored Programs asap if you are interested in either of these programs

Grant Content and Procedures Checklist

1. Abstract

- a. Identify the grant applicant. The grant applicant is always the “University of Northern Iowa”, never an individual or departmental unit.
- b. Address each of the following:
 - Credibility-the University's ability to carry out the project
 - Problem
 - Objectives
 - Methods
 - Evaluation
- c. Indicate the total cost of the project and the amount requested

2. Introduction

- a. Be concise
- b. Identify the key individual(s) and department unit(s) that will conduct the project.
- c. Describe the University’s
 - Purposes and goals related to the project
 - Programs and activities related to the project
 - Clients or constituents
- d. Provide the University’s accomplishments related to the project
- e. Lead logically to the problem/need statement

3. Problem/Need Statement

- a. Prepare this section in a concise and **compelling manner—why should they fund your grant over anyone else?**
- b. Address the literature review thoroughly, focusing on need and originality
- c. Support every claim with data / statistics / quotes

4. Objectives

- a. State objectives in measurable terms
- b. Describe population that will benefit from this project

5. Work plan / Methodology

- a. Ascertain that the work plan appears logical after the objectives section
- b. Align the workplan with the time & resources of the proposal
- c. Provide rationale for selected activities
- d. Describe project’s activities
- e. Provide timing of activities
- f. Assign responsibilities to Principal Investigators, staff, and collaborators for each activity.

6. Evaluation

- a. Present a plan for evaluating the project's accomplishments
- b. Outline who will conduct evaluation and experience of the selected evaluator
- c. State criteria for success
- d. Explain how data will be collected and analyzed
- e. Explain any test instruments or questionnaires to be used
- f. Discuss evaluation reports to be prepared

7. Dissemination

- a. Discuss how project results will be disseminated to others via such mechanisms as websites, conference presentations, journal articles, and others

8. Qualifications of Key Personnel

- a. Describe the Principal Investigator's education and experience as it relates to the grant proposal.
- b. Describe others' education and experience as it relates to the grant project

9. OSP Review

- a. Provide narrative to OSP Grant Specialist for review at least 2 weeks prior to deadline if you would like to have your grant reviewed.

10. Budget

- a. Provide a detailed breakdown of all project costs. Refer to the Office of Sponsored Programs website for examples and fillable budget form. *Coming Soon.* (www.uni.edu/osp)
- b. Include matching funds only if required by the funding agency. Obtain written commitments from the department(s) that will provide the matching funds.
- c. Detail fringe benefits, separate from salaries
- d. Include all consultants and/or subcontractors
- e. Include appropriate indirect costs and rate, if applicable
- f. Obtain budgetary feedback from the Office of Sponsored Programs Grants Specialist and/or Grants and Contracts staff, Edward Ebert or Michele Mullings-Shand within 5-7 days of the deadline.

11. Submittal

- a. Complete Request for External Funds (REF) and obtain signatures (<http://fp.uni.edu/osp/images/files/externalFundsRequest.xls>)
- b. Edit, complete, and print final required forms. Downloadable federal forms can be found soon at www.uni.edu/osp/preparingproposals.htm
- c. Enclose appendices
- d. Prepare Table of Contents and Cover Sheet; if one is not provided by the funding agency ensure that the application cover page includes a space for the University's authorized official to sign.
- e. Bind your proposal appropriately. Be aware that most federal agencies prefer unbound proposals.
- f. Submit your proposal according to specified deadlines. Initiate electronic submittals at least 5 days prior to the deadline.

- g. Upon notification of funding, inform OSP and download Grants Management Checklist (Coming Soon)
- h. If your grant is not selected for funding, be prepared to resubmit (most successful grants are resubmitted grants). Request reviewer comments and make changes accordingly for the next submittal date.