

# What is needed to put together a good proposal?

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# A Good proposal...

- Anticipate solicitation for a RFP
- Be prepared when solicitation happens
- Recognize that even under best of circumstances it takes time to write a competitive proposal
- Interdisciplinary proposal writing takes much longer than writing a disciplinary proposal

# A Good proposal...

- Don't expect to be successful by throwing together something at the last minute!
- Consider theoretical foundations and prospective theoretical contributions in developing your proposal
- Consider the journals where you plan to publish and the audiences who read these journals as you begin to write your proposal

# A Good proposal...

- Map out your constituents/communities with which you will be communicating.
- Work with relevant program manager/officer well ahead of the proposal due date.
- Determine how well you align with what funding agency is seeking.
- If alignment is not great, assess the option of “stretching” or making changes in your plans.

# A Good proposal...

- Think carefully about who to include on your team as co-PI or senior personnel or outreach partner
- Watch for special/specific qualifications and guidelines.
- Read very well program solicitation.
- If you have questions, contact your program officer well ahead of the deadline.

# A Good proposal...

- External ad-hoc reviewers, selected by funding agencies, tend to be more focused.
- Panel reviewers tend to be more generalized in their perspectives.
- Get your scientific details correct.
- Read every line of your proposal very critically.
- Appeal to as broad an audience as possible.
- Provide a broader theoretical framework that works down to one or just a few questions.

# A Good proposal...

- A research plan in the proposal must be well specified, scientifically sound, and must have plans to test or answer focal questions.
- In the Intellectual Merit section, provide clear and believable statements.
- Write proposal in a single voice, and not like an anthology.

# A Good proposal...

- Assume that the audience is well educated but doesn't have extensive topical knowledge.
- Be sparse in the use of jargon; stay focused and to the point
- Make sure terms are well defined when you use them.
- Format the proposal in such a way that it is highly presentable and easy to read.

# A Good proposal...

- If appropriate, use graphs and photos to complement text. Make readability better.
- Budget must be driven by research and related project needs.
- Don't imply that an award is an entitlement; don't be greedy!
- Try to increase bang to buck ratio, that is, choose budget items well
- Assess every line in the budget. Is expense necessary at this level? Ask if this item is not funded would research be diminished?

# A Good proposal...

- Competitive proposals take a lot of time to write, so give yourself a lot of time.
- Competitive proposals take a lot of work to finish, so prepare yourself to do a lot of work to submit a successful proposal.
- Comply with all requirements of the funding agency.
- Work with Office of Sponsored Research on budget.

# A Good proposal...

- Include strategies for monitoring the project as it evolves.
- Include strategies for evaluating the project's effectiveness when completed.
- Include project-specific expected measurable outcomes on student learning, contributions to the knowledge base, and community building.

# Some points to think about before submitting your proposal

- Is your idea innovative or significantly important?
- Is the process or material or technique you are proposing exemplary or very useful?
- Have you stated potential findings of your work in terms of new knowledge?
- Have you made a case that your project builds on existing knowledge?
- Did you state outcomes of your proposal explicitly?
- Did you tie outcomes with evaluation plan?
- Did you explain what will evaluation lead to?