FACT SHEET

20 TIPS FOR GRANT WRITING SUCCESS

1. **Find the right program for you and your idea.**

   Review the purpose of the program or funding priority, and determine if your idea fits. Is it a mainstream fit? On the fringe? Do you meet the eligibility requirements? Don't waste time applying for the wrong programs.

2. **Become a "student" of the Request for Applications (RFA) document.**

   Read it in full. Understand the main goals of the program and the instructions outlined on how to assemble the proposal.

3. **Develop a timeline for preparation.**

   Create a timeline that allows for completion of the proposal at least four weeks before submission deadline. If you rush preparation it will show, and reviewers will notice.

4. **Understand criteria for evaluating proposals.**

   RFAs normally contain the criteria that will be used by reviewers to evaluate your proposal. Understand these criteria before you begin preparing your proposal. It will provide better understanding of where to target greatest efforts.

5. **Understand review process and reviewers.**

   Reviewers may be assigned 10 to 20 proposals. Following directions in the RFA, and preparing the proposal logically and clearly helps reviewers.

6. **Write logically and clearly.**

   Organize the proposal according to the outline in the RFA or evaluation criteria, whichever is most logical.

7. **Prepare a budget with a strong justification.**

   Unreasonable budgets hurt proposals. Keep budgets within the guidelines of the RFA. They are judged on degree of reasonableness.

8. **Obtain critical input from experienced and successful colleagues.**

   Find someone who is clear, concise and not afraid to be honest with feedback.

9. **Fill out forms completely and correctly.**

   Make sure you have prepared all required documents and include all required information in the correct format.

10. **Allow time for intramural administrative requirements.**

    Submit on time and follow all deadlines.

11. Make sure your project team has all the expertise needed for successful completion.

Recruit collaborators or technical consultants as needed. Include letters of support, if required. Clearly explain who will do what and why, as well as each person's expertise and why they are required on the project.

12. Use acronyms sparingly and identify them.

Acronyms conserve space but often at the expense of clarity. Consider including an acronym "key" to which the reader can easily refer.

13. Write clearly and concisely.

Avoid words with multiple meanings – e.g., use because instead of since, that instead of which, and may instead of might. Avoid redundancy except where it is critical, such as in hypotheses, goals or outcomes.

14. Use font effects sparingly.

These include highlighting, bold, italics, underlining, etc. Use consistently and primarily when critical to focus the reader on that text.

15. Use tables and figures to help illustrate important points.

A picture can be worth 1,000 words!

16. Avoid writing dense narratives.

17. Omit use of external links.

Proposals should be self-contained.

18. Write for both the expert and the novice.

Not all reviewers will be experts on your proposed topic but will have some expertise to contribute. Write to show seasoned reviewers that you are an expert and current on the topic. Write also so the novice reviewer can understand the proposal and to show the importance of the work.

19. Learn about the review process.

The best way to do this is through experience, like serving on RFA review panels. Review RFAs to identify programs for which you have expertise, and contact the program leader to volunteer. Provide a very brief description of your expertise and your CV.

20. For resubmitted proposals, respond to the previous review positively and effectively.

Use the one-page Response to Previous Review to your advantage in communicating revisions. Be polite and appreciative. Reviewers will give credit to applicants for a nicely crafted Response to Previous Review.

Developed from "Grant Writing Tips for Success" presentation by Dr. Mark Mirando, National Science Liaison, AFRI Science Coordinator