

Writing a Winning Proposal



The Ten Golden Rules of Writing a Winning Proposal

1. If you write proposals, you get grants
2. Find the right sponsor for your idea
3. The Golden Rule prevails: he who has the gold, rules
4. Funding agencies (even federal agencies) are managed by people
5. Don't annoy the reviewer

The Ten Golden Rules of Writing a Winning Proposal, cont.

6. Read the Guidelines before all else fails
7. Don't ask for money – provide the grantor with an opportunity to support your project
8. You need ask only six questions: who, what, where, why, when, and how much?
9. If you re-submit four times and still aren't funded, get a new idea
10. Edit carefully!
11. Bonus Rule: Be Compliant

RULE #1 Writing

- If you don't write, you won't get grants
- Set aside a specific time each day dedicated to writing
- Research shows a ten-fold increase in # of ideas by individuals who do this rather than wait for ideas to come before they write



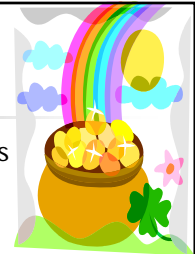
RULE # 2 Find the Right Match



- Look for the slow, fat rabbits (i.e. easy funders w/lots of money)
- Find out the agency's funding priorities
- Find a sponsor that is interested in your idea or
- Fit your idea to the sponsor's priorities
- Talk to the sponsor's program officer

RULE # 3 Golden Rule

- Follow the sponsor's rules
- Know your deadline
- Read the RFP
- Formatting is important
- Consider obtaining an outside review prior to submission
- TALK TO YOUR PROGRAM OFFICER



RULE # 4

It's Who You Know

- Ultimately, people decide whom to fund
- Get to know the program directors at the agency
- Call them
- Invite them to hear you speak at presentations
- Seek their guidance
- TALK TO YOUR PROGRAM OFFICER

It's Who You Know, cont.

- Reviewers are human beings
- Avoid language that may be offensive to potential reviewers (e.g. "toxin" vs. "peptide")
- Reviewers are experts in their field – cite them
- Use suggested reviewers or non reviewer opportunities if allowed
- Explicitly consider opposing views

RULE #5

Don't annoy the reviewer

- Unprofessional appearance
 - avoid handwritten pages
 - Choose an easy to read font style & size
 - Avoid such editorial mistakes such as "Dave, put info here"
 - Double check spelling and grammar

Don't annoy the reviewer, cont.

- Avoid Disorganized and Incomplete Proposals
 - Use headings and subheadings
 - Include all required elements
 - Accurate table of contents & page nos
 - Include all referenced citations and appendices

Don't annoy the reviewer, cont.

- Avoid sparse justifications
 - Important details must not be omitted or vague
 - All elements of proposal must be reasonable and logical
 - Realistic budget justification
 - Include letters of support

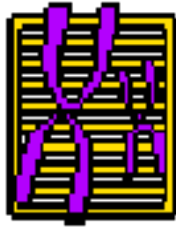
RULE # 6

READ THE DIRECTIONS!

- Deadlines – external & internal
- All sections covered – page #'s font & margins
- What is important to the agency?
- Specific things in title or on face page?
- Un-allowed Costs, budgets, equipment, etc.
- Limited submissions
- Eligibility Requirements
- Cost Share
- Type of Proposal (prelim, contingent, full, research, training, public service)
- # of publications – modular budgets – foreign issues

RULE # 7 What is the Sex Appeal of Your Project?

- Don't make it appear that you are begging for money
- Give them a good reason to fund your ideas
- Put the punch in your abstract



RULE # 8 Answer the Questions

- What
- When
- Where
- Why
- Who
- How much

RULE # 8 Answer the Questions

- Avoid untested measures or techniques or complex methods where the PI lacks expertise
- Provide a backup alternative approach in the event the proposed innovative method fails
- Make sure you have the equipment, facilities, supplies and people you need – let the sponsor know what you've got
- Overly broad SOW's don't get funded
- Reviewers know what things cost – don't disappoint them
- Technology and Data Sharing – New HOT TOPIC!
- BE the EXPERT or FIND ONE!

Rule # 8 – Answer the Questions

- Proposals are not journal articles or a thesis and should not sound like one
- Think of a proposal as an extended marketing advertisement for your idea – the prose sounds very different
- Enthusiasm & passion is allowed in proposals
- If you haven't hooked the reviewer in the first 4 pages – you have lost the opportunity

Rule # 9 Taking Criticism

- Consider it an opportunity to create an even better proposal next time
- Don't take it personally
- Address the reviewers' comments
- Know when it's time to get a new idea



RULE # 10 The Final Phase

- Edit carefully
- Have a non-technical person read it for organization and understandability
- Ask yourself, why is this project important?
- Stay positive

Bonus Rule

Proposals set the stage for compliant grant management

- Do not over commit:
 - an employee's effort - this applies to all personnel
 - institutional resources, i.e., space, personnel and money
 - the timeliness or substance of deliverables
- Commitments need to be consistent throughout proposal
- Set clear and reasonable expectations of sub contractors
- Include the highest level of F&A recovery rate

The Review Process

- You are encouraged to watch the NIH video on the peer review process which is available at:
<http://cms.csr.nih.gov/ResourcesforApplicants/InsidetheNIHGrantReviewProcessVideo.htm>