

# Preparing a Grant Proposal

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## Overview

- Finding a funding source
- Matching your idea with the type of project for which funding is available
- Preparing to write the proposal
- Actually writing the proposal
- Common problems to avoid
- Resubmitting a proposal

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## **Finding Funding Sources**

**Some possible sources of information:**

- **Your professors and colleagues**
- **Acknowledgments in publications**
- **Published or posted announcements**
- **Listserves in your field or at your institution**
- **Published or posted guides**

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## **Preparing to Write**

**The proposal must persuade the potential funding source (e.g., institution or agency) that**

- **the goal of the proposed work is worthwhile**
- **the proposed approach is sound**
- **the individual submitting the proposal is capable of carrying out the work**
- **adequate facilities will be available**
- **the requested amount is reasonable**

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## **Common Sections of a Proposal**

- **Background information**
- **Statement of goals**
- **Research plan or project description**
- **Budget**
- **Information on qualifications of personnel (for example, resumes or curricula vitae)**

**(Note: Depending on the requirements, proposals can range from one page to many pages.)**

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## **Other Items Sometimes Included**

- **Cover letter**
- **Title page**
- **Abstract**
- **Table of contents**
- **Lists of tables and figures**
- **Description of predicted impact**
- **Plan for disseminating results**
- **Information on facilities**
- **Reference list**

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## **Preparing to Write the Proposal**

- **Carefully review materials from the potential funding source**
- **Consult the program officer, if appropriate**
- **Look at examples of successful proposals submitted to the same funding source**
  - **From colleagues**
  - **From the program officer**
  - **Published or posted**

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## **Writing the Proposal**

- **Start early—sometimes at least 6 months in advance**
- **Consider including a writer or editor on the team**
- **Read the instructions carefully, and follow them precisely**
- **Match the technical level of the proposal to the background of the reviewers**
- **Organize the writing carefully**

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## **Writing the Proposal (continued)**

- Present overviews before details
- Use simple, common wording where possible
- Avoid wordy phrases
- Make effective (but not excessive) use of such devices as headings, boldface and italics
- If relevant, include a timeline
- If the proposal will include an abstract, devote special care to it

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## **Writing the Proposal (continued)**

- If there are forms to use, complete them carefully
- If part or all of the proposal consists of freestanding text, format it to read easily
  - Standard typeface
  - Large enough type and margins
  - Unjustified (ragged) right margin unless otherwise requested

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## **Common Problems to Avoid**

- **Failure to follow the instructions**
- **Seeming unfamiliarity with relevant published work**
- **Lack of originality**
- **Superficial or unfocused research plan**
- **Lack of a valid scientific rationale**
- **Exceeding page limits for proposal**

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## **Common Problems (continued)**

- **Problems with the experimental approach**
- **Lack of experience with key methods**
- **Insufficient experimental detail**
- **Lack of preliminary data, if needed**
- **Poor record of publications from previous funding**
- **Project director(s) not qualified**
- **Not as exciting as other proposals**

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## **Common Problems (continued)**

- **Unrealistically ambitious plans**
- **Unrealistic budgeting**
- **Failure to justify budgetary items enough**
- **For service projects, lack of sufficient information on evaluation plans**
- **Inconsistencies in the content**
- **Excessive use of acronyms/abbreviations**

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## **A Suggestion**

- **As you prepare and refine your grant proposal, envision yourself writing journal articles or a book about your completed research. Will you have all the needed information? If not, revise your research plan.**

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## **Please Note!**

- **Carefully follow instructions for submitting the proposal (often done electronically for many funding sources)!**

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## **Not Being Funded**

- **Not enough relevance to the funding agency**
- **Low scientific merit**
- **Poor record of publications from previous funding**
- **Project director(s) not qualified**
- **Not as exciting as other proposals**
- **Lack of funds by funding agency**

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## **Resubmitting a Proposal**

- **Note: For some funding sources, revising and resubmitting proposals is common**
- **In revising the proposal, use the advice from the reviewers**
- **Consider consulting the program officer**
- **In general, accompany the revised proposal with a list showing, point by point, how the reviewers' advice was followed**

## **How to evaluate your chances of obtaining funding**

## **How well positioned are you as a scholar?**

- Your place in the literature
- Your place in the discipline
- The extent to which you have integrated research and teaching
- Evidence of international contacts and possibly collaborations

## **How well positioned are you as a researcher?**

- A long-term research program
- Established relationship with resources, colleagues and collaborators
- Existing record of accomplishments
- Previous data
- Know the competition!

## **Successful Proposals**

- **Excite the reviewers**
- **Are easy to read and understand**
- **Have an appropriate literature review**
- **Have a clear rationale**
- **Contain a detailed project description**
- **Clearly stated hypotheses or research questions**

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## **Questions?**

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