

Top Twelve Grant Writing Tips for Success

As you begin and continue to engage in the process of writing grant proposals, refer frequently to this list and ask yourself if you have accomplished these tasks.

- 1) Start early – do not wait until the last minute. Be ready with a proposal idea when a deadline comes up; don't just respond to a rapidly approaching deadline.
- 2) Read the guidelines, read the guidelines, read the guidelines.
- 3) Find out who has received an award from the source to which you are applying. Contact them and find out about their project and their application. Ask for - and read - a copy of a successful proposal (without budget info).
- 4) Serve on a grant proposal review panel.
- 5) Assemble a team well in advance. May include on-campus and off-campus collaborators, mentors, recommenders, tech support, others with resources (individuals, centers, institutions); include your chair, dean and the grants office. Share your ideas with them and enlist their support.
- 6) Focus your proposal – do not include everything you know; concisely focus on your best ideas for the project or need.
- 7) Do not submit a “trust me” proposal. Establish yourself as qualified to carry out the research or task. Explain and justify the good work you have done and will do. Do not expect reviewers to know you or understand your track record. Explain how this project is the appropriate next step in your professional career, building on previous research, teaching, etc. While you are at it, update your résumé.
- 8) Write for an intelligent layperson – not just for other experts in your field. They need to be able to recognize that the project is appropriate for the funding source, significant beyond your individual circumstance or situation, and that you understand the issues and have creative approaches.
- 9) Try to make sure your project is more than just data collection; discuss what will or can be done with the data. What new information will be generated?
- 10) Develop credible plans for assessment and dissemination and not just as afterthoughts. How will you know that you have been successful? And how will you let others know about your work?
- 11) Design a realistic project – or a portion of a larger project – that can be accomplished by the end of the grant period.
- 12) Does the quality of the proposal reflect the quality of your research/work? Only submit proposals that are error-free and readable: 12 pt. font, 1” margins, double spaced, number all pages, name on all pages.