Grant Writing: The Secret of Getting Funded and a Set of "Quick Tips"

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The most important thing to remember when writing a research proposal is that someone else (a peer reviewer) has to read it and become convinced of its merit. Every proposal should be written from the beginning with this concept firmly in mind. The second thing to remember is that a peer reviewer must be convinced—very rapidly—of the importance of your proposal (compared to all the others being read at that same time). This is best done by raising an emotional response in the reviewer, a sense of excitement about the importance and promise inherent in your proposal. At the end of the first paragraph, or at most the first page, your reviewer must begin to feel a sense of enthusiasm for what you want to do. They must begin to "care" about the work you are proposing, and you must make that happen by what you write and the way you write it. Of course what you propose must also be feasible, well described, and you must show that you have the knowledge and skills to pursue it successfully…if only you can be given the money you request in support. So at the heart of any good proposal is a first page that is concise, well written and that raises a reasonable level of enthusiasm in the reader for the importance and exciting possibilities of your work.

- A good proposal is always well-organized and understandable—use headings, subheadings, and page numbers in considering your proposal's appearance.

- Read and re-read the sponsoring agency's instructions and follow them exactly.

- Be aware of the deadline dates, these are absolutes and proposals not submitted on time are not reviewed by the funder.

- Does your project meet or address a significant problem? Do you document and demonstrate that? Why is this important and how is what you propose different from what has been done in the past?

- Show your familiarity with current research in the field; support your project's intent with evidence.

- Do you define your objectives or hypotheses? Are these clear and measurable?

- What is your approach? Specify exactly what you will do to accomplish each of your objectives.

- Do you have a management plan, a timeline for activities, and do you discuss the expertise of the project staff?

- You must have an evaluation plan—how will the funder (and you) know that the project accomplished it goals?

- You must have a detailed budget that adequately supports project staff & activities.

- Most funders now require online submissions; give yourself and ORSP enough time to be comfortable with the site requirements.

- Don't forget the ORSP—we are here to help! research-grants.adelphi.edu.