Description

Research Grant Proposal: A Competition for Money?

As research institutions adjust to the new reality of declining federal research funds, the search for other sources of research grant funding has become even more competitive. Locating a non-profit organization with funds to support your research in a competitive environment can be such a moment of excitement that you want to start filling-in the research grant proposal template right away to make sure your request sits as close to the top of the pile as possible.

You have all of the information on your proposed study at your fingertips, and it's just a matter of putting that information into the right boxes, getting the appropriate supporting documentation and signatures, dispatching your completed proposal, and then crossing your fingers and waiting for a response.

Common Misconceptions

Unless you have stumbled upon a research grant proposal that has a submission deadline only a few days away, beginning a proposal in the manner outlined above is a forgivable mistake based on several misconceptions:

- **The Deadline:** This stipulates the date by which your proposal has to be delivered. Since the dollars are not available on a first-come-first-served basis, rushing to grab your place in a pile will guarantee mistakes rather than any perceived location advantage. The grant committee won't start reviewing applications until after the deadline.
- **The Information:** Your institution is probably applying for multiple grants rather than pinning all hopes on one application. Therefore, you have probably organized all of your information well in advance so that you can fill each proposal in as efficiently as possible. That makes logical sense, but proposals differ in expectations, and if you approach them as the same boxes needing the same information, your proposal will come across as broad and generic rather than specifically targeted for this opportunity.
- **Crossing Your Fingers:** Even if you are submitting for multiple grants, communication should be open and regular with the committee after a reasonable amount of time beyond the deadline has passed. Most grant committees will have a *submission* deadline as well as a *decision* deadline, and if they need more information from you, they will ask for it.

The Grant Proposal Template

The purpose of a grant proposal template is to help the grant committee to gather the information they need to make a decision in as consistent a format as possible.

However, it should never be considered as the only information you need. That doesn't mean that you

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should overwhelm them with superfluous information to present a distinctive proposal. What it means is that you should be gathering much more information than the proposal offers you about the agency:

- Background on the funding agency beyond stated mission, vision, values, etc. Is the research focus changing? Is there a change of emphasis from basic to applied research? Have the metrics for successful research performance changed?
- Information on past grant awards and award winners
- Who else may be applying (difficult to find out)
- Grant Committee Members—research expertise, industry experience, etc. (difficult to find out unless listed on the website)

Complete the proposal template in the same way as you would follow the submission requirements of an academic journal—the requests are there for a reason. If you don't understand a request, the funding agency will gladly help you to clarify what is needed. The more information you can gather before you start filling-in those boxes, the better chance you will have of receiving a grant award.

Category

1. Manuscripts & Grants
2. Reporting Research

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