Submitting successful grant proposals to NSF

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Outline

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Definitions

- **Pre-proposal**
  - A 5 page conceptual document
  - Sufficient information that allows the reviewers and the program directors to invite you to submit a full proposal

- **Proposal**
  - Narrative: 15 pages
  - Summary (abstract) containing an intellectual merit, and broader impacts sections
  - NSF style Biosketch
  - Budget and budget justification
  - Data management plan
  - Facilities

- **Program Director**
  - Permanent or rotating
  - Manages review panel(s)
  - Negotiates budgets with potential PI
  - Writes recommendations for funding or declinations

- **Program Officer**
  - Any professional staff involved in managing the intake, placement, budget, compliance, and processing of awards or declinations

- **Grant/award**
  - Funded proposal
First Steps

- Read carefully the solicitation
- Write a “white paper”
- Contact one of the program directors associated with the funding mechanism you want to pursue.
  - Program directors can provide information about what are the projects they are willing to recommend for funding, and which ones even if they are perfect, will not.
- Have sufficient time to write a well-reasoned proposal.
  - 4-5 months before the submission
  - A 3-D approach to deal with logistical issues
  - A good/great concept is not sufficient to get an award. Logistical issues are as important.
- Publish papers in peer-reviewed journals.
  - Presenting a seminar/session at a conference may be considered by some reviewers and some program directors as not acceptable.
    - This is one of the best assurances reviewers and program directors have of your ability to complete the goals of your proposals.
Proposal Drafting

- Follow the solicitations guidelines about what sections to include.
- Follow NSF GPG guidelines
- Cite relevant and current literature in the field you are proposing to pursue a funding mechanism.
- Include enough details about the logistics of implementation
  - Do not make assumptions
- Proposals must be knowledge gaining
  - Evaluation plans are important
- Do not bloat your budget
  - Follow the guidelines to ensure you don’t include un-fundable items (i.e. computers)
- Include detailed descriptions in the budget justification
Compliance

- Our Research Foundation is great at checking compliance.
- Lack of compliance can result in NSF returning your proposal without review.
  - Lack of Data management plan
  - Lack of facilities section
Reviewer’s perspective

- PI research productivity
- Clear and assessable project aims/goals
- Sufficient logistics in the narrative
  - Who, where, and why?
- Acceptable data management plan
- Following the solicitation
Program Director’s perspective

- Same as reviewers
- Diversify the funding portfolio
  - New PI
  - All kinds of institutions
  - Regional distribution
- Compliant institution
- Previously funded PI
  - Submitted annual and final reports on time
- Aligns with the program funding priorities
  - This is why it is important to contact the program director
Improving your chances of getting funded

- Serve as a panel reviewer in the program you intend to submit a proposal.
- Have a solid publication record.
- Contact the program director and get feedback.
Things that reduce your chances of getting an award

- Low publication record
- Did not follow the guidelines
- Doesn’t align with funding priorities
- Proposal was poorly organized
- A high number of grammatical and spelling errors
- Proposal was not technically written.
  - This is not a” sales pitch”.
- Goals/aims that can not be assessed.