Show Me The Money: Foundations of Grant Writing

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Today's Agenda

Identify	Learn	Understand
Identify how to best develop proposals and which key components can lead to winning proposals. Identify types of external funding.	Learn key terminology, how to develop a proposal and common sections of a grant	Understand how funders select, review, accept and measure grant effectiveness and work and collaborate with their grantees

Different Levels of Grant Experience

NEW TO GRANTMAKING

WRITTEN A GRANT

WRITTEN AND RECEIVED A GRANT

Why Grant Writing?

It's *very* hard work.

Often feels like the recognitions and rewards are not in line with the efforts.

If you get the grant, then it means more work for you.

Successes can create animosity with peers.

"There is no such thing as *free* money."

Why Grant Writing Explained

To provide needed community services.

Program expansion.

To keep or create jobs.

The competition.

Salary bonus or other rewards.

Other reasons???

Terminology

- Grant award
- Grantor
- Grant or program officer
- Grant period
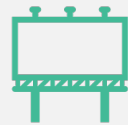- Grant report / evaluation

Terminology

Requests for Proposal (RFP)

Requests for Application (RFA)

Program Announcement (PA)

Application Kit

RFPs I

Many standard sections.

Deadline, amount, eligibility, etc.

Will tell when and how to get the application kit.

RFPs II

This will be the first formal announcement of the competition; called "***hitting the streets***."

You may have known about it and had fairly solid information but nothing is set until the announcement.

Contains critical information.

Application Kit

Will come out after the RFP.

Usually long, detailed. Not always in a logical order.

May have very important information buried in it that if not followed can disqualify the proposal.

This happens when sections are written by different entities at different times.

Application Kit

It is an important early task of all grant team members to *thoroughly* analyze the kit. Sometimes multiple times and aloud.

Common sections:

Notice of invitation (may have more information than the RFP).	Introduction (eligibility; project manager; closing date; funding levels; dates of funding; etc.)

Getting Started I

1) Identify the problem and opportunity

2) Understand the work required

3) Read application and requirements

4) Write summary statement

Getting Started II

5) Develop a budget

6) Create an outline

7) Get your team in order

Writing styles

- Descriptive – this is not creative writing.

- Write to all categories (will cover later) –
  this means you are sometimes repetitive.

- Be very aware of the point-scoring criterion when writing – spend the most effort on the highest scored sections.

- Use the same language as in the *Request For Proposal*.

Key Principles I

- Clear, concise. Little jargon. The goal is to communicate clearly, not demonstrate mastery of the English language.

- Utilize sources of external and internal data throughout the proposal. For example, use U.S. Census data for demographic and socioeconomic profiles of the area to be targeted.

- Use accents (bold, underline, etc.) for key points; don't overuse.

- Effectively use charts and tables.

Key Principles II

Write to the peer reviewers; think like a reviewer. Self-identify the 'holes' in the proposal concept, then in the narrative, try to patch the 'holes.'

Be very aware of the requirements (sections, format, number of copies, etc.) of the RFP and Application Kit; be a "literalist."

Key Principles III

Be realistic in goal setting – either under-estimating or over-estimating outcomes can be damaging.

Be realistic about your ability to "pull it off," if funded. If you can't do it, don't compete. Reputation with the funding source for future funding is imperative.

Key Principles IV

This can be a very competitive process (for example, I have peer reviewed on grants where there are 250 – 300 proposals for 10 – 15 awards). Therefore, what may appear to be minor things may make the difference between being funded versus not being funded.

By writing, getting written feedback, attending grant writing training, and working with successful grant writers, you greatly increase the odds of getting funding for your projects.

Key Principles V

- Need to develop a "thick skin." Everyone must be able to constructively criticize the proposal.

- Grant writing is usually intense, especially as the submission date is looming. Pick your partners well.

Grant Writing Teams I

With the team, you need to discuss/establish leader (Project Director/Principle Investigator) early on – establish role of the leader.

Teams that have worked well tend to stay together – sometimes, due to the nature of grant writing; it is difficult to bring in new members.

Grant Writing Teams II

Common model - You want people that can get along, yet bring different skills, perspectives to the process.

- Conceptualizer; dreamer; big picture
- Logical; realistic; details
- Budgets
- Strong writer
- Community connector
- Editor/critical feedback

How to Identify Strengths in a Grant Team

EXECUTING	INFLUENCING	RELATIONSHIP BUILDING	STRATEGIC THINKING
People with dominant Executing themes know how to make things happen.	People with dominant Influencing themes know how to take charge, speak up, and make sure the team is heard.	People with dominant Relationship Building themes have the ability to build strong relationships that can hold a team together and make the team greater than the sum of its parts.	People with dominant Strategic Thinking themes help teams consider what could be. They absorb and analyze information that can inform better decisions.
Achiever Arranger Belief Consistency Deliberative Discipline Focus Responsibility Restorative	Activator Command Communication Competition Maximizer Self-Assurance Significance Woo	Adaptability Connectedness Developer Empathy Harmony Includer Individualization Positivity Relator	Analytical Context Futuristic Ideation Input Intellection Learner Strategic

Writing the Proposal

Writing the Proposal I

Clearly delineate responsibilities – use team members' strengths.

Example:

- Budget
- Support Letters
- Grant sections

Establish timelines – use the "backdoor" method.

Writing the Proposal II

Know institutional rules and regulations.

Establish technical controls – computer software,   disk management.

Schedule regular meetings.

Establish method of sharing work.

"Edit down" technique of writing.

External reviews, when possible.

Creating an Outline

Use the headings and sub-headings of the selection criteria to create your proposal outline. You then can be assured of at least minimally covering all the categories. Don't make the reviewers search to see if you've covered the criteria.

With experienced grant writers, this activity is one of the first ones done.

You can choose to add other categories. But always cover the established criteria.

After Submission

Contact from funding source assigning a proposal number.

Thank you notes to writers of letters of support.

Contacting key legislators and other people for support (optional).
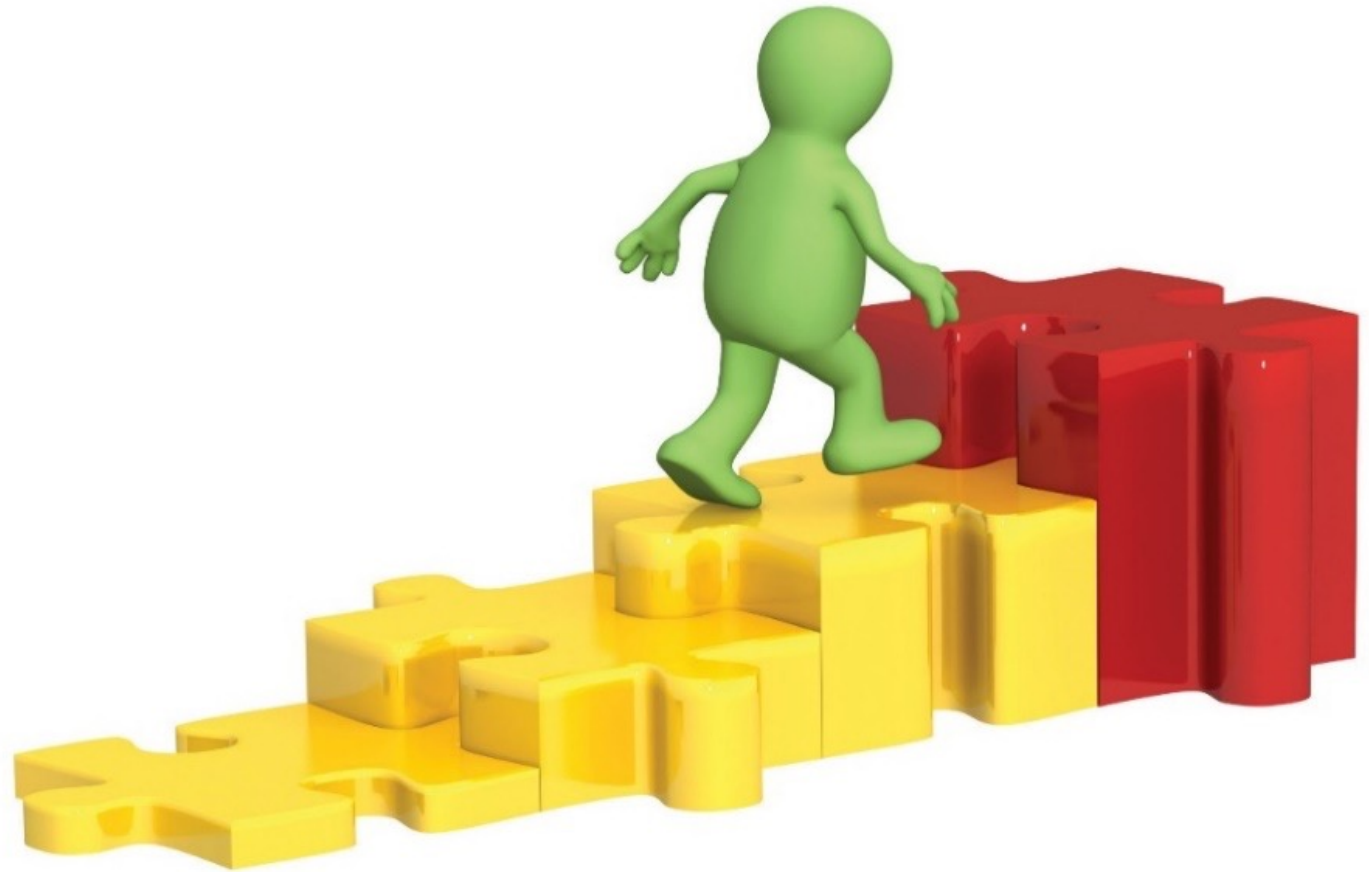
Hurry up and wait…wait…wait.

Peer Reviews

Purpose of a Peer Review

The primary purpose is to provide outside (individuals who are not applying for funds; "conflict of interests") assessment of proposals.

When done correctly, helps eliminate charges of favoritism, etc.

How will it be judged?

Ideally, this information is presented in a clear, concise format within the application kit.

Federal grants give detailed information; whereas foundations sometimes give virtually none.

Be a "literalist"; it is these published criteria that the proposal is supposed to be graded against; nothing else.

The Peer Review Process

The peer reviewers will (or <u>should!</u>) use these same criteria to rate your proposal.

Get the written review score and comments from the agency whether you get funded or not, especially when you are denied funding.

Type of Competition

With foundations, the peer reviewers will be board members, staff, and/or key family members of the foundation.

With grants, it tends to be outside, impartial authorities.

Peer Review Process

Invitations to designated reviewers are made; teams are compiled.

Proposals are then sent to each reviewer approximately 2 weeks before the panel meeting.

Each reviewer individually reviews and scores each proposal using criteria forms provided for that competition.

Review Panels

Peer reviews are conducted by panels of reviewers. A 3- member team is common although larger ones are also used.

When composing a team, the funding source usually looks for some *balance* of skills, experiences, perspectives, etc.

Review Process (cont. II)

The panel discusses each proposal separately.

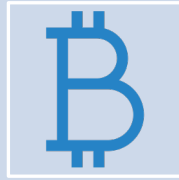Consensus is sought but is not mandatory.

Individual reviewer can and do change their scores based upon discussion with other reviewers; changes are documented.

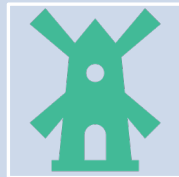Funded source usually uses a statistical formula to control for lack of "inter-rater reliability."
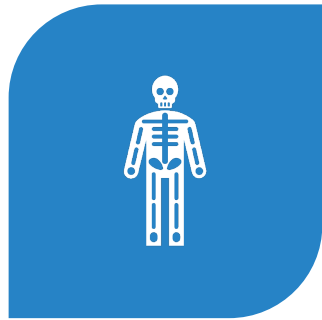
Review Process (cont.)

After discussion, each reviewer has a final individual score and the team then has a total score. Also, the team votes to "fund" or "not fund."

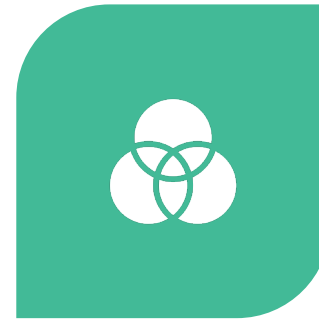The lead then writes up a summary report.

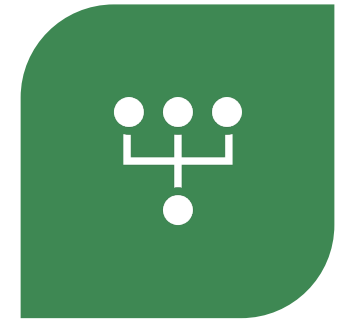The panel is then done. The funding source has the final decision making.

REVIEWERS DON'T FOLLOW THE SELECTION CRITERIA (AND THE STAFFER DOESN'T STOP IT).

REVIEWERS DON'T DOCUMENT WHY THEY GAVE CERTAIN SCORES.

REVIEWERS ALLOW OWN BIASES INTO THE PROCESS.

POLITICS ARE ALLOWED TO INFLUENCE THE SELECTION PROCESS AFTER THE PEER REVIEW.
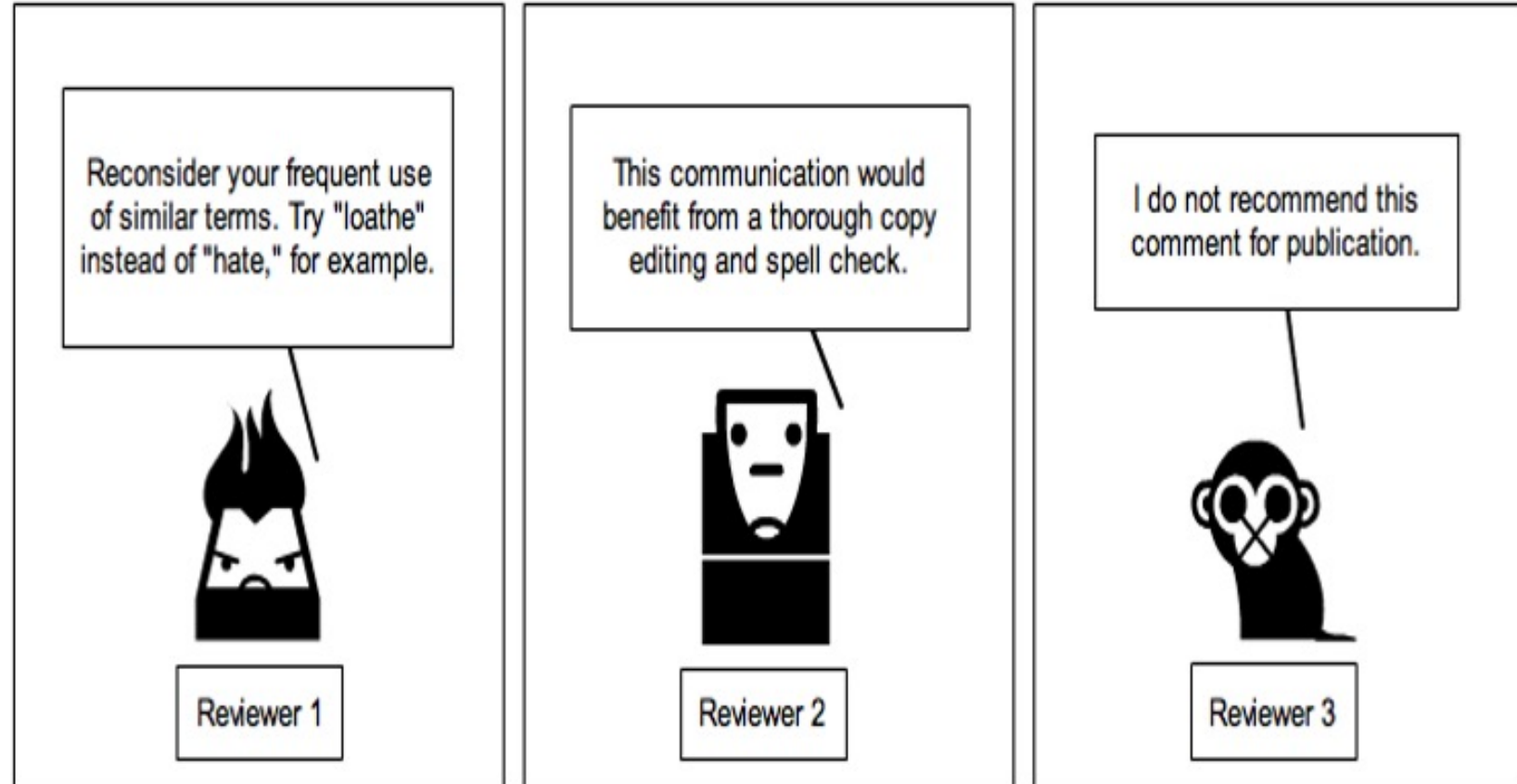
Potential Problems in the Review Process

If *Not* Funded

Letter of denial.

Peer reviewers' comments.

Consider rewriting.

If Funded

Usually a telephone call.

Peer reviewer's comments.

Official notification.

Get the word out; another round of "thank you" notes.

Grant management - Now the work begins!

Grant Sections

I. Introduction

II. Problem Statement or Needs Assessment

III. Objectives

IV. Methods

V. Evaluation

VI. Future or Other Necessary

VII. Budget

Qualifiers

The following discussion is general in nature; the specifics of the competition will dictate the structure of the proposal.

What is presented are *common* sections.

The order of presentation in this lecture generally follows the order in a grant.

*However,* this is not the order in which you write them.

Introduction I

Strongly recommend this section even if not part of the scoring criteria; you are introducing, in broad terms, your project to the reviewers.

You are beginning the process of building the case that you can accomplish the goals of the project. You need to excite the reviewer into reading the whole proposal.

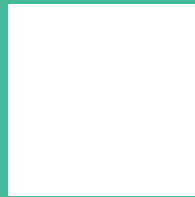# Introduction II

Introduce what is unique about you/your area. Keep in mind operational definitions, like 'South Texas' or 'Rio Grande Valley.'
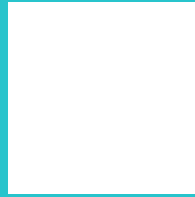
Especially important when you are an unknown commodity.

"Readability" is extremely important.

Documentation of Need

Also known as "Problem Statement." Show the funding source you understand the problem.

Therefore, the funding is available – because someone (the funding source) thinks there is a need.

Your overall goals in this sections are:
1. Document the need.
2. Show that you have the needed analytical abilities.

Need I

Use different types of data, internal and external.

"Hard" data – citable, established. Examples: U.S. Census, Center of Disease Control, etc.

"Soft" data – anecdotal, quotes of key people.

Need II

Sometimes the best you can do is to "extrapolate."

↓

Example: Number of people in the LRGV who use wheelchairs.

↓

Reviewers are *not* looking for "trust me statements"

Example: "It is well known that the border economy suffers when the peso declines."

↓

Turn needs or problems into positive statements and opportunities.

Goal & Objectives

Differing terminology is used.

Goal: The overall goal (sometimes plural but not usually) of the project.

Often long-range impact.

Typically taken from the RFP. Example: Improve access to college for students with disabilities.

Objectives

Measurable outcomes of the project.

Tie into the need and will tie directly to the evaluation section.

Who, what, how much, when?

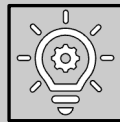Typically not a lot of objectives in the proposal but can greatly vary.

Methodology/Work Plan

Sometimes called the "Management Plan/Work Plan."

Should be very detailed, explaining how you will accomplish the objectives.

Must demonstrate you have a detailed understanding of what you are going to do.

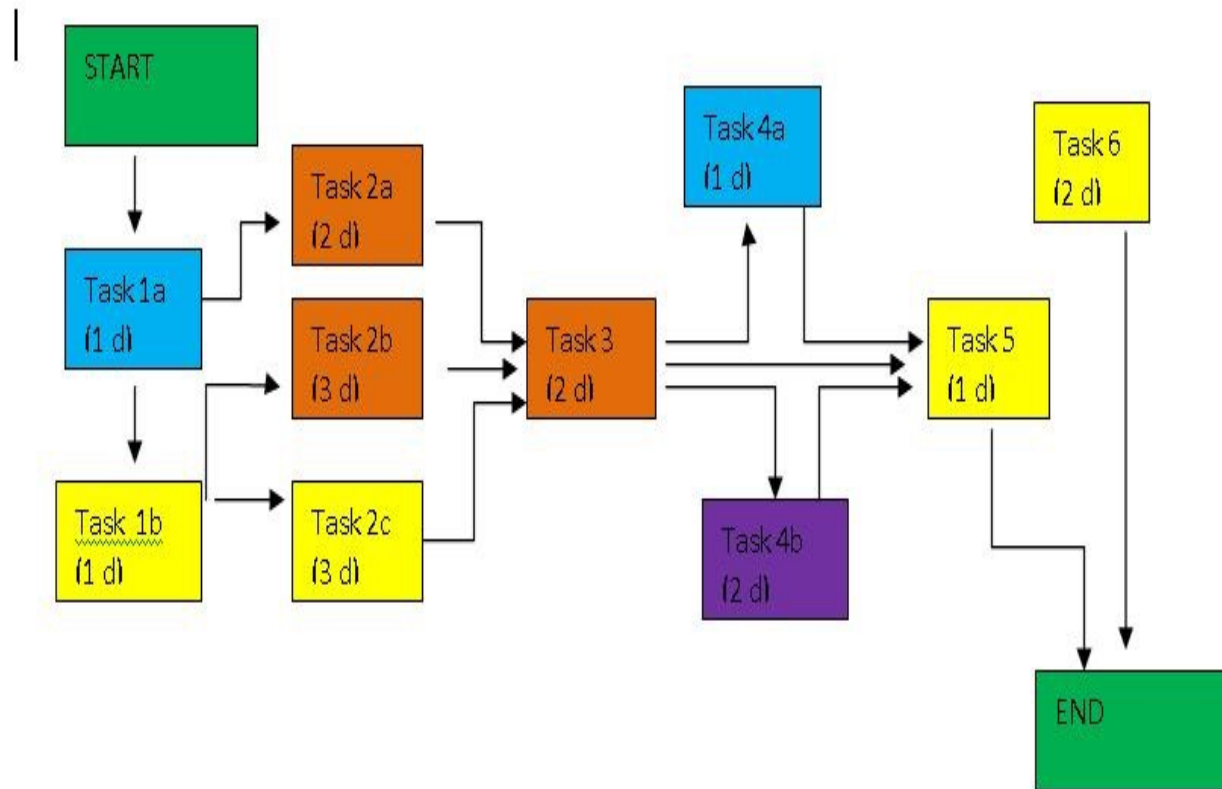Directly tied to the *Objectives* of the grant.

Use *activities* or *action steps*.

Methodology

Visual displays of information can be very important

Many varieties of charts

Evaluation I

Often a difficult sections for many grant writers.

Important to show the funding source that you know how to evaluate the project – is their money being used wisely?

Although important, often not that many points…so?

Evaluation II

Formative versus *Summative*

Often proposal want to see a "loop" that will tie formative results back into the management plan to improve the process.

Evaluation III

Who should do the evaluation?

Directly tied to the objectives.

Triangulation – what does this mean?

Collect data from multiple sources – don't forget the benefactor of the project.

Quantitative versus qualitative methods.

Charts can be effective

PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION TEMPLATE

PROJECT NAME

MEETING DATE

MEETING TIME

FACILITATOR

ATTENDEES

MEETING OBJECTIVES

Original Project Goal: State the project's scope of work and deliverables. Was the product delivered on time and to client satisfaction?

Timeline: Compare the initial schedule to the actual timeline. Were there events that impacted the schedule or client relationship?

Budget: Did the outcome match the original cost goals?

TEAM DISCUSSION

Did we get our desired results?

What went well?

What could've gone better?

What could we do differently next time?

ACTION ITEMS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS

What are the actions that we can implement now?

WRAP-UP

Thank the team and, when ready, send out a meeting recap.

Quality of Personnel

Usually focuses on the PI/PD.

Also other *key* personnel.

Like all parts of a proposal, if this is a strength, you include more. If not, you try to address by future hiring's.

Frequently a section that gets "edited down."

Future Funding or Sustainability

If this is part of the criterion, it's usually not weighted heavily.

The more specific the better but is often vague, "wish" statements.

Part of the "game" is to show that you are thinking of other funding options – to show the funding source that their money is an investment.

Innovative Practices

Although you should "weave" this through your proposal anyway, there may be a specific section on it.

Unique?

Statements from others?

Supporting Documents

Abstract

Budget

- **Budget chart**
- **Budget narrative or justifications**

Appendices

Letters of commitment/support

Abstract I

Often called a "Summary" in the text.

You are really "painting the picture" of your proposed project.

One page, usually can be single spaced.

Does not count against your narrative page limit.

It summarizes the entire proposal. Probably the most important section since this is where you 'hook' the reader.

Abstract II

Use the abstract to get Letters of Support/Commitment.

Utilize key concepts and words of the narrative in the abstract (cut and paste is okay). As a result, it is usually the last part of the proposal to be written.

Important pieces:

- Introduction
- Summary
- Goal(s) & Objectives
- Amount requested and for how long.

Budget I

Some categories are very specific and well defined such as salaries and fringe benefits.

Others are not such as postage – you end up deciding upon exact amounts when you are "fine tuning" the budget.

In-kind versus Indirect

Budget II

Example of Budget

Very much dictated by the grant restrictions.

You have to learn what is allowable, what categories there are, and some operational definitions (e.g., "equipment").

Remember that your budget proposal is an *estimate*– not the total amount, but how it is distributed.

The budget should reflect the narrative and the narrative should reflect the budget throughout the proposal

Budget Narrative

Example of Budget Narrative

Budget narrative – may be required. If not, usually a good idea. It will explain to a reviewer how you came up with the estimates.

The budget should reflect '*allowable costs*": Reasonable, Allocable, and Consistent

Difference in budget proposal and budget management.

Appendices

Remember, frequently these do not have to be included in scoring by reviewers – so if it's vitally important material – get it in the narrative.

Letters of supports, charts, job descriptions, samples of training modules, etc.

Attachments

1. Forms that are required to be completed and included.

2. Important to not miss any of these.

3. Also called Assurances.

Letters of Commitment

"Letters of support" vs. "letters of commitment."

Quality over quantity.

Selecting the right, most effective supporters.

Strategies for increasing the return rate.

Tip: "Table of contents" for letters of support

And Finally…..

- Finalize & Review

- Proof and proof again

- Keep a "clean" hard copy

- Copy clean version and Upload

- Proof – one last time

- Send with cover letter (if required)
- Follow-up

Grant Decisions: The Turn Down

- Opportunity for discussion
- Call with specific questions
- Business decision
- Playing the odds

What is Grant Evaluation?

- Productivity
- Effectiveness
- Quality
- Timeliness

What the Grantors are Evaluating

- *Was the organization able to implement project?*

- *What progress has been made?*

- *What were the barriers?*

Conclusion

As a grant writer:

- Become a reviewer, which helps you think like a reviewer when writing.

- Keep reviewers' comments for future reference.

Grant Training Resources

The Grantsmanship Center

www.tgci.com

How to Write a Winning Grant Proposal

Grant Proposals (How to Give Me the Money)

Resources: Finding Grant Opportunities

- https://foundationcenter.org

- https://www.tgci.com

- www.GrantsWatch.com

- www.GrantStation.com

- www.Newmobility.com

- www.Grants.gov

QUESTIONS?

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