



GRC Web Conference: Strategies for Developing Competitive Grant Proposals

Thursday, June 23, 2005, from 1:30-3:30 EDT



**Mimi Tangum,
GRC Director**



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**Technical Assistance:
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How To Participate

1. At any point during the presentation, type your question in the box that states "To ask the presenter(s) a question, type it here and click Ask"
2. Click on the "Ask" Button.
3. Your question has now been sent to the speaker who will answer it at the appropriate time. Once you receive a confirmation message, feel free to type another question.

NOTE: Each institution can only type one question at a time and must wait until they receive a confirmation message prior to being able to type another question.

(Phone lines will be muted during the web conference)

TECHNICAL QUESTIONS

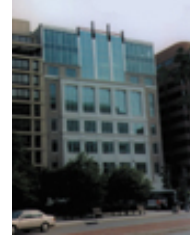
For any technical questions during the web conference, please contact the GRC information line at 202/478-4711.

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The Grants Resource Center

provides both federal and private grants information, support services, and advice to its member colleges and universities nationwide. GRC was created over 35 years ago to help strengthen institutions by providing late-breaking information on grant opportunities and technical assistance in competing successfully for them.



If you're in Washington, DC, our home is your home

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Grants Resource Center Services

- Daily electronic publications
- Rich resources posted to our Web
- Personalized information and advice
- Representation at Washington meetings
- Networking with colleagues and federal/private program officers
- Campus presentations and consultations



GRC Custom Services

Researching, Representing, Informing, Consulting

Researching

- Locating award recipients and facilitating connections with them
- Identifying appropriate funding sources for various faculty ideas
- Finding the experts who can interpret government regulations
- Monitoring the legislative process

Representing

- Meeting with program officers to ask members' general questions
- Attending agency budget briefings and technical assistance workshops
- Arranging for meetings with agency contacts



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GRC Custom Services

Researching, Representing, Informing, Consulting

We publish:

- *GrantWeek* every Monday - an electronic magazine containing in-depth articles on pending legislation; new grant programs; proposed changes to agency rules; and the federal budget
- *GRC Bulletin* (three times weekly) and *GRC NIH/NSF Bulletin* (every Wednesday)—providing hundreds of funding alerts
- *GRC Deadlines*—giving members a head start on proposal writing

Informing

We monitor:

- Latest priorities and pending legislation
- Outcomes of proposed policy revisions
- All information posted for members' viewing exclusively at <http://www.aascu.org/grc>

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GRC Custom Services

Researching, Representing, Informing, Consulting

Consulting

Campus Presentations

- Agency program and budget reviews, tailored to members' requests
- Proposal Development Workshops
- Mock proposal reviews

Individual Meetings with Faculty

- Helping faculty determine the most useful funding possibilities
- Assisting faculty to develop their ideas into proposals
- Advising new faculty on handling first meetings with program officers

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GRC Custom Services

Researching, Representing, Informing, Consulting

GRC WASHINGTON CONFERENCES

Where researching, representing, informing, and consulting come together

- Building networks with colleagues
- Building federal partnerships
- Listening to and talking with federal and private funding agency experts

GRC Fall
Conference

“Growth –
Resources -
Change”

September 18-
21, 2005



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GRC Website

Easy-to-access and information-rich funding resource for faculty and administrators

Accessible to all members of GRC institutions' communities (see your sponsored program administrator for your institution's username and password).

Website Features:

- The latest funding program highlights, with upcoming deadlines
- Special sections for targeted funding opportunities
- Library of funded proposals
- Library of current and archived GRC publications
- Links to a variety of other on-line resources

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GrantSearch

Contains over 2,000 funding opportunities specifically selected for GRC member-institutions.

•Searchable by

- »Keyword or Title
- »Subject
- »Program name, sponsor, and/or activity
- »CFDA number

•Entries include

- »Description of the funding opportunity and links to on-line information
- »Deadline and last verification date
- »Contact information

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Overview of Federal Funding

- Largest supporter of university research projects
- Compartmentalized, with pointed research interests that respond to Congressionally mandated priorities
- Funds localized projects primarily through basic research programs
- Maintains stringent reporting requirements under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) to ensure that goals of agency programs are met
- Processes program information electronically
- Especially interested collaborations, in leveraging federal dollars

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Overview of Foundation Funding

- Approximately 60,000 private foundations in the U.S.
- Often have restrictions on eligibility, such as that of location or type of institution (GRC screens foundation opportunities to determine whether public institutions are eligible to apply)
- Often have very specific areas of interest
- Many provide significant support for projects which federal agencies support in only a limited fashion
- See the Foundation Center Website for more information:
<http://www.fdncenter.org/>

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Key Words in Current Funding Climate

- Interdisciplinary Projects
- Collaborations
- Partnerships

Seed / Exploratory Grants

- For researchers exploring new, innovative, or high-risk research areas
- For those beginning or returning after career interruption
- More specifically:
 - For reduced-scale projects, to break new ground, or explore partnerships/collaborations
- More than 350 included in GRC database

Some Examples

- **Sampling of small, seed, and exploratory programs (nearly 350 appear in the GRC database)**
 - NIH Academic Research Enhancement Awards (AREA), at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/funding/area.htm>
 - NIH Academic Career Awards, K07, at <http://grants.nih.gov/training/careerdevelopmentawards.htm>
 - Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality Small Research Grant Program, at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PAR-01-040.html>
 - Dreyfus Foundation Teacher-Scholar Awards Programs, at <http://www.dreyfus.org/tc.shtml>
 - NSF Earth Sciences Postdoctoral Research Fellowships, at <http://www.nsf.gov/div/index.jsp?div=EAR>
 - Educational Leadership Foundation Grants, at the American College Personnel Association, <http://www.elfacpa.org/>

Turn your idea into a project

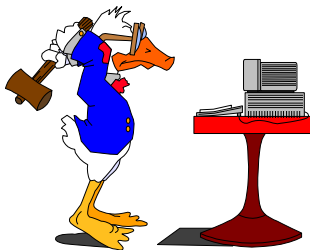
- Develop a prospectus
- Identify possible funding sources
- Obtain specific program guidelines
- Contact the program officer:
 - Early, frequent contact builds the relationships and provides the knowledge that pay off at review time
- Obtain a funded proposal/Talk to a funded PI

Obtaining a Funded Proposal

- **How to obtain funded proposals**
 - Use GRC, Sponsored Research Office, agency contacts, awards lists, and databases to locate/request copies of funded proposals
- **How useful?**
 - As guides (if not followed too closely)
 - Can lead to contact with successful Principal Investigator
 - Prospective PI to successful PI is best to reap benefits of other's experience

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ONLY ONE TASK REMAINS:



A closer look at the proposal development
process....

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“WRITING IS THINKING.”

--Wise Saying

- Think about the audience:
 - What do they already know about you, your institution, your idea?
 - What do they NEED to know for your proposal to rise to the top of the stack?

What DO They Need to Know?

Some Sample Review Criteria

NSF Review Criteria

- What is the intellectual merit of the proposed activity?
- How *important* is the proposed activity to advancing knowledge and understanding within its own field or across different fields?
- How *well qualified is the proposer* (individual or team) to conduct the project? (If appropriate, the reviewer will comment on the quality of prior work.)
- To what extent does the proposed activity suggest and explore *creative and original concepts*?
- How *well conceived and organized* is the proposed activity?
- Is there sufficient access to *resources*?

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NSF Review Criteria (cont.)

- **What are the broader impacts of the proposed activity?**
- How well does the activity advance discovery and understanding while promoting teaching, training, and learning?
- How well does the proposed activity broaden the participation of underrepresented groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity, disability, geographic, etc.)?
- To what extent will it enhance the infrastructure for research and education, such as facilities, instrumentation, networks, and partnerships?
- Will the results be disseminated broadly to enhance scientific and technological understanding?
- What may be the benefits of the proposed activity to society?

http://www.nsf.gov/pubs/gpg/nsf04_23/3.jsp#IIIA1

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NIH Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications

1. Significance

- Does this study address an important problem?
- If the aims of the application are achieved, how will scientific knowledge or clinical practice be advanced?
- What will be the effect of these studies on the concepts, methods, technologies, treatments, services, or preventative interventions that drive this field?

NIH Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications (cont.)

2. Approach

- Are the conceptual or clinical framework, design, methods, and analyses adequately developed, well integrated, well reasoned, and appropriate to the aims of the project?
- Does the applicant acknowledge potential problem areas and consider alternative tactics?

NIH Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications (cont.)

3. Innovation

- Is the project original and innovative?
 - For example: Does the project challenge existing paradigms or clinical practice; address an innovative hypothesis or critical barrier to progress in the field?
- Does the project develop or employ novel concepts, approaches, methodologies, tools, or technologies for this area?

NIH Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications (cont.)

4. Investigators

- Are the investigators appropriately trained and well suited to carry out this work?
- Is the work proposed appropriate to the experience level of the principal investigator and other researchers?
- Does the investigative team bring complementary and integrated expertise to the project (if applicable)?

NIH Criteria for Evaluating Research Applications (cont.)

5. *Environment*

- Does the scientific environment in which the work will be done contribute to the probability of success?
- Do the proposed studies benefit from unique features of the scientific environment, or subject populations, or employ useful collaborative arrangements?
- Is there evidence of institutional support?

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/NOT-OD-05-002.html>

Review Criteria: NEH Fellowships & Summer Stipends

1. The intellectual *significance* of the project to the humanities, including its potential contribution to knowledge and learning.
2. The quality or promise of *quality of the applicant's work* as an interpreter of the humanities.
3. The quality of the *conception, definition, organization, and description* of the project.
4. The *feasibility* of the proposed plan of work and the likelihood that the applicant will complete the project

<http://www.neh.gov/grants/guidelines/fellowships.html#review>

“WRITING IS MORE THINKING.”

--Wiser Saying

Put yourself in the place of the readers:

What can you do to make it easy for them to follow your complex proposal?

“There is no such thing as being too explicit.”

--NSF Program Officer

- Use jargon-free language;
- Explain Why as well as What;
- Use subheads;
- Include a timeline;
- Make sure budget and activities match.

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“WRITING IS REWRITING.”

--Wisest Saying

- Get feedback from an excellent writer NOT in your specific or general area of expertise:
 - Is every question of the narrative guidelines addressed?
 - Is there repetition or anything that diverts attention from the focus of the proposal?
 - Is anything unclear—taken for granted — in any part of proposal not requiring disciplinary expertise to understand?
- Rewrite.

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“AND MORE REWRITING.”

- Get feedback from someone in your disciplinary area:
 - Does the proposal compellingly address a vital need in the field?
 - Is the methodology’s soundness persuasively presented?
- Rewrite. Again.

“NEARLY FINISHED REWRITING”

- Think as the reviewers will:
 - Critique your own proposal.

Writing Better Proposals

- **What makes a proposal fatally flawed?**
 - Project does not fit agency mission
 - PI or PD is ineligible to hold grant from agency (check guidelines)
 - Institution/department is ineligible for program
 - Proposal violates mechanical guidelines (format, length, budget)

Writing Better Proposals

- **What makes a proposal fair (i.e., severely flawed)?**
 - Obsolete topic
 - Obsolete approach
 - Limited significance or impact
 - Arguments not compelling
 - Capabilities of investigators, students, institutions not persuasively presented

Writing Better Proposals

Obstacles to a Proposal's Success:

- Vague language; lack of clarity
- Poor organization (unclear abstract; repetitive, rambling narrative)
- Ideas introduced that don't illuminate the point
- Outcomes of project not specified
- Funder's priorities not explicitly addressed
- Scope of project impractical in terms of time or use of funds
- "Mystery" budget

Evaluating Your Own Proposal

How do you go from "competent" to "funded"?

"The trick is to convey YOUR excitement for the project to the reviewers—so that it "grabs them."

--Fred Winter, Sr. Program Officer, NEH

"It's the enthusiasm of the PI—the passion—that comes through the writing and infects the reviewers."

--Program Officer, Biological Sciences, NSF

Evaluating Your Own Proposal

- **Start with the abstract:**
 - Can you form a clear picture of the proposal from abstract?
 - Does the abstract convince you the problem is worthy of investigation or solution?
 - Is the plan for investigation or the solution to the problem creative?
 - Are you eager to turn the page and read more?

Evaluating Your Proposal (cont.)

- **Read background/significance:**
 - Does the section clearly explain a gap in existing knowledge or an otherwise real need for the proposed activities?
 - Are you convinced, through preliminary results or prior experience cited, that the P.I. will be able to address the need?
 - Are you left with the conviction that the solution to the stated problem would significantly impact the disciplinary areas?

Evaluating Your Proposal (cont.)

- **Read the research or work plan (usually the majority of a proposal):**
 - Is it chronologically presented and well-conceived?
 - Does it “flow,” one concept clearly lead to another, in the true sense of a narrative?
 - Are procedures adequately supported with literature references?
 - Is that which the investigator expects to accomplish crystal-clear?
 - Are contingency plans presented, if some outcomes do not occur as expected?
 - Is the language professional without being stuffy?
 - Is the timeframe realistic?

Evaluating Your Proposal (cont.)

Applicant’s Qualifications:

- What can you say to make reviewers EAGER to turn the page and read your CV?

Evaluating Your Proposal (cont.)

Institutional Support

- What resources is the university or college providing for you?

Proposal Review Checklist

- Is the proposal written clearly **for** the assumed audience?
- Is it organized logically, so that it's easy to follow?
- Does it persuade you that the project is significant?
- Does it persuade you that the PI or PD can carry the project through to completion?
- Is there evidence of institutional commitment?
- Are there any ways the proposal can be strengthened?

Final Thoughts

- Do your homework before applying:
 - Be aware of entire application process: letters of intent/pre-proposals/technical assistance workshops/full proposals
 - Ask questions:
 - **Sponsored Research Office, GRC, Program Officers, Colleagues**
- Build relationships, especially with program officers;
- Make clear that institutional strengths match priorities of funding agency; that project responds to sponsor's goals;
- Ask for critiques of your drafts by at least two colleagues.

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Final Thoughts (cont.)

- Just in case it becomes necessary...
 - Obtain reviewers' comments;
 - Give them objective consideration;
 - Call program officer to discuss;
 - Resubmit;
 - ***Persevere.***

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For Excellent Further Assistance, Contact

*Your Institution's Director
of the
Office of Research and Sponsored
Programs*

*Thanks for joining us today,
Dan Riggle and Mimi Tangum*

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Web Conference Announcing the first of the 2005 series

Thursday, July 21, 2005
2:00-4:00, EDT Register

**NEH grants for Teaching and Learning
Resources and Curriculum Development**
Wilsonia Cherry
Deputy Director, Division of Education
National Endowment for the Humanities

Wilsonia Cherry, Deputy Director of the Division of Education Programs at NEH, will discuss the Teaching and Learning Resources and Curriculum Development Program at the upcoming July 21st GRC hosted Web Conference. Dr. Cherry will discuss the Teaching and Learning Resource Curriculum Development Program and describe strategies through which faculty can become more competitive for curriculum/materials development opportunities for both university and K-12 teachers. Immediately following Cherry's presentation will be an interactive Q&A session, through which conference attendees will have the opportunity to submit questions via email for Cherry to answer.

Thursday, August 25, 2005
2:00-4:00, EDT

**National Science Foundation's Course
Curriculum and Laboratory Improvement**
Russell Pimmel
Program Director, Course Curriculum and Laboratory
Improvement (CCLI) program
National Science Foundation

The Course, Curriculum, and Laboratory Improvement (CCLI) program, which has changed substantially for FY 06, seeks to improve the quality of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education for all undergraduate students. Based on a cyclic model of knowledge production and improvement of practice, CCLI supports efforts that conduct research on STEM teaching and learning, create new learning materials and teaching strategies, develop faculty expertise, implement educational innovations, assess learning, and evaluate innovations. The program supports three types of projects representing three different phases of development, ranging from small exploratory investigations to comprehensive projects.



<http://www.aascu.org/grc/events/webcon/default.htm>

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END OF PRESENTATION

