“Grants 101”

A Overview of the Grant Writing Process
by L. Eric James II, JD MS
This seminar is designed to give an overview of the grant writing process as well as anecdotal evidence of what seems to lead to a successful grant proposal. This is the collected wisdom of myself and my past and present colleagues and is not meant to be a holy grail – just some hints I picked up along the way that seem to work.
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Part I – Finding a Funding Source and Writing the Proposal
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“Research”
- Journal Articles
- Conference Presentations
- Grants
  - Federal
  - State
  - Industrial Projects
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Hint One:
Know Yourself
• Writing Style
• Organizational style
• Interests
• Level of Flexibility
- then play to your strengths
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Finding Opportunities

- Two Philosophies
  - Look at what is available that may interest you and write a proposal for that opportunity
  - Define a research question then seek funding opportunities that will support your question
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Shopping: From either path, you will need to look at what is out there in terms of funding opportunities
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Where to Shop?
http://www.grants.gov/applicants/find_grant_opportunities.jsp
http://www.nsf.gov/funding/
http://www.research.gov/rgov/anonymous.portal
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FIND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

*IMPORTANT NOTICE: All applicants please read immediately*

All discretionary grants offered by the 26 federal grant-making agencies can be found on Grants.gov.

You do not have to register with Grants.gov to find grant opportunities. However, once you are ready to apply for a grant, you will need to Get Registered. This process takes 3-5 business days.

Search Grant Opportunities

- Search by keyword, Funding Opportunity Number (FON) or Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number.
- Search by a variety of categories of funding activities.
- Search from a list of agencies offering grant opportunities.
- Search by more specific criteria such as: Funding Instrument Type, Eligibility or Sub-agency.
- Search for Recovery Act Opportunities.

Once you have found the grant opportunity for which you wish to apply by entering a specific search criteria, click the "application" button in the grant opportunity synopsis.

You may also search for a specific application package by the Funding Opportunity Number (FON), Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) number or Funding Opportunity
We are going to use the most recent NSF MRI RFP that uses ARRA funds and also the DEPSCoR BAA as our samples going forward.
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Understanding the Lingo

- Acronyms
Step One:
Read the Summary of Program Requirements/Funding Opportunity Description
Ask yourself:
- Is this something I am interested in?
- Does this fit with what I want to do?
- Am I (Univ.) eligible?
Step Two: Dissect the proposal requirements

- What needs to be included?
  - Narrative Content
  - Budget Requirements
  - Other Documentation
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Ask yourself: can I reasonably expect to accomplish these things by the submission deadline?

If you think you can, then PRINT the RFP or BAA. You are ready to roll the dice and pass “Go.” You will be reading this multiple times, making notes and possibly highlighting pieces. Trust me – kill the tree – it’s worth it.
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The Guidelines will mention specific requirements for content in each section; page numbers; supporting documentation, and specific budget requirements. Highlight, tab, underline – these items as they are critical to the success of the proposal.
Hint Two:
These are specific instructions that you are meant to follow. They are there for a reason. Evaluators reading your proposal are looking for ANY reason not to have to look at it – failure to follow the guidelines is an easy way to be dismissed from the pool.
**DEPSCoR FY09 Checklist**

**Pages**
- 1-2: Cover Page from DEPSCoR
- 1-25: Proposal
- X: Budget

**Contents**
- 1 Pg: Abstract
  - Description of Research
  - Relates to Research Goals of School
  - Describes Grad Student Role
  - Describes interaction with DoD
  - Describes current and proposed research facilities
  - Narrative rational for each budget item equipment
  - Identify other parties involved in support

**Budget**
- a: Salaries (# months & % effort)
- b: Supplies (List & Describe)
- c: Equipment (List & describe relation to research in Narrative)
  - Based on Quote
- d: Travel Costs
  - Destination
  - Breakdown
- e: Publication & Report
- f: Subaward Costs
  - Detailed cost summary
  - ID of recipient
- g: Consultant Cost
  - Daily Fee
  - Travel Cost
  - Nature of Consult
  - Relation to Goal of Proposal
- h: Communication Costs
- i: Other Direct Costs
- j: Overhead/F&A
- k: Summary
  - Year by Year of each Category
  - Table
  - State/Institutional/Other
  - Signed statement of commitment for match

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**Hint Three:**
At this point you can’t be too OCD or anal retentive. It is okay to make a checklist for yourself if there is not already one in the proposal guidelines; color coding is also an option at this point.
Step Three:

Once you have made your checklists and determined all of the contents that will be needed for your proposal based on the guidelines, go back to the RFP/BAA and find the Program Officer. Call or e-mail them – express your interest and ask for any other requirements that may not have made it into the guidelines.
Hint Four:
There are often Psychic components to the guidelines that you will be expected to include and the only way you will figure them out is through personal contact with the Program Officer.
Psychic Guideline examples include (but are not limited to):

- Expected costs in budgets
- Expected % of total award spent on particular items (10% on Evaluation)
- Inclusion of trips
- Use of particular methodology
**Step Four:**

Now you may write the darn thing. I recommend writing the full narrative for the proposal first, then digesting it into the abstract. However, remember Hint One: know yourself. If you work better starting from an abstract and expanding, go that route.
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Part II – Budgets, OMB Circulars & Match
You have written your narrative and also have a checklist for what needs to be included in your budget. It is now time to actually come up with how you plan to spend the big bucks.
Remember Hint One? Here’s **Hint Five**: If you know you are not a financial person – seek help. Somewhere on your campus is an OSP, ORA, ORP or some other Office that deals with budgets. Find them. They are your new best friend. If you choose to go it on your own these are some things to consider:
Each funding Agency has its own format for a budget. This is never the same as the one used at your institution for their accounting purposes. Find the right format and begin there.
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NSF Budget Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Senior Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Other Personnel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Post Docs</td>
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<td>2 Other Professionals</td>
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<td>3 Graduate Students</td>
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<td>4 Undergrad Students</td>
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<td>5 Secretarial/Clerical</td>
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<td>6 Other</td>
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<td>C. Fringe</td>
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<td>D. Equipment</td>
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<td>E. Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 Domestic</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2 Foreign</td>
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<tr>
<td>F. Participant Support Costs</td>
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<td>1 Stipends</td>
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<td>2 Travel</td>
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<td>3 Subsistence</td>
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<td>4 Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>G. Other Direct Costs</td>
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<td>1 Materials &amp; Supplies</td>
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<td>2 Publication Costs</td>
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<td>3 Consultant Services</td>
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<td>4 Computer (ADPE)</td>
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<td>5 Subcontracts</td>
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<td>6 Other</td>
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<td>H. Total Direct Costs</td>
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<td>I. Indirect Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Total Direct &amp; Indirect Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>K. Residual Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>L. Amount of this request</td>
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<tr>
<td>M. Cost Share</td>
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</table>

Grants.Gov Budget Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Federal</td>
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<td>424</td>
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<tr>
<td>A. Category</td>
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<td>A. Personnel Costs</td>
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<td>B. Fringe Benefits</td>
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<td>C. Travel</td>
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<td>D. Equipment</td>
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<td>E. Supplies</td>
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<td>F. Contractual</td>
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<td>G. Construction</td>
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<td>H. Other</td>
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<tr>
<td>I. Total Direct Charges</td>
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<td>J. Indirect Costs</td>
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Department of Defense Budget Categories

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<tr>
<td>I. Total Direct &amp; Indirect Costs</td>
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<tr>
<td>J. Contract Fee</td>
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<td>K. Total Requested</td>
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Hint Six: Accountants (and especially people doing grant accounting) have a unique way of using English. Don’t assume you know what “equipment” means or any other cost category. If you try and budget say a desktop computer in Equipment 99.9% of the time that is in the wrong place.
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There are rules about what is generally an expense that is allowed to be paid out of a grant and what is not. For grants, they come from something called the OMB Circulars. Each Circular covers different organizations. The one for Educational Institutions is A-21. 

NOTE: it is possible to be subject to more than one Circular at a time.
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Relevant OMB Circulars

A-21 - Cost Principles for Educational Institutions
A-87 - Cost Principles for State, Local, and Indian Tribal Governments
A-110 - Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Agreements With Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals, and Other Non-Profit Organizations
A-122 - Cost Principles for Non-Profit Organizations
A-133 - Audits of States, Local Governments, and Non-Profit Organizations

http://www.whitehouse.gov/OMB/circulars/index-education.html
Hint Seven:

- Even something that might not normally be an allowable expense can become an allowable expense if it passes the three tests and the proposal is approved.
1) Is it a “reasonable” cost for the proposal?
2) Can the cost be allocated to the proposal in fair measure (can you tell how much is really the grant’s expense and how much may belong to some other funding source?)
3) Did you get prior approval for it in the budget/proposal?
A-21 § J. General provisions for selected items of cost.

Sections 1 through 54 provide principles to be applied in establishing the allowability of certain items involved in determining cost. These principles should apply irrespective of whether a particular item of cost is properly treated as direct cost or F&A cost. Failure to mention a particular item of cost is not intended to imply that it is either allowable or unallowable; rather, determination as to allowability in each case should be based on the treatment provided for similar or related items of cost. In case of a discrepancy between the provisions of a specific sponsored agreement and the provisions below, the agreement should govern (emphasis added).
Hint Eight:
Once you think you have a budget drafted, go back and re-read your narrative. Is the time listed in the budget a fair estimate of the time it will take to accomplish the pieces in the proposal? Did you mention any item in the proposal that is not listed in the budget? Did you get everything from your checklist?
COST SHARE/MATCH
Defined as an expense from another funding source that is used for a purpose that “matches” the goal and objectives of the proposal.
In order to count as match it not only has to align with the project, it must be sufficiently documented.

- Time Sheets
- Invoices
- Letters
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Common Sources of Match
• Departmental Overhead Accounts
• Your “research” block of time
• Equipment purchased by the Institution with State funds
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- Part III – Other Things to Include in Proposals or Other Things About Proposals
Remember when you are writing that you are trying to persuade someone to buy into your idea and give you money for it.
Hint Nine: Header/Footers

• Add the header/footer in when you convert the entire document into a .pdf

• Include your name and title of proposal in the header/footer
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Budget Narratives/Justifications
These are a written explanation of each cost in your budget, how you arrived at that amount and why it is essential to the success of your program.
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Evaluation

How are you going to measure whether or not your objectives/goals were met?
Yes, they take up space
Not everyone reads/comprehends the same way. For people who are visualizors having an image they can jump off of may increase the chance they will become engaged in your proposal
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Jobs Created
- New one that has come about as a result of the Stimulus Bill
- Good example of another Psychic requirement in the Guidelines
Proposals are Disclosed Information

• Unless otherwise provided for, proposals are considered public domain and are reachable via a FOIA request (Freedom of Information Act)
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Certifications & Assurances

- NIH Human Subject Matters Certification
- Form – SF 424
- Lobbying Disclosure Form
Part IV – IRBs, Research Ethics & Mentoring of Post-Docs
Human Subjects Research

- Require protocols to protect anonymity of subjects; health; & safety
- Protocols needed to be reviewed by an Institutional Review Board
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America Competes Act
- Effective October 1, 2009
- NSF / NIH (?)
- Requires development of Mentoring plan for post-doctorates and non-Senior Personnel where applicable
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America Competes Act

- Also mandates instruction for students (undergrad & grad) in research ethics and professional conduct
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Research Ethics

• Unbiased protocols
• True reporting of results even if they don’t support your hypothesis
• Reporting of all results
• Fair assignment of authorship
• Knowing when to ask for help
Part V – How Proposals are Evaluated by Reviewers
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Review teams are generally composed of experts in the subject matter that have been invited to participate in the review of the proposals by the funding agency.
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Review teams also generally include a contract officer and/or an accountant.
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Many times, your proposal will be ripped into sections as soon as it arrives:

- Program Officer = Proposal Narrative
- Contract Officer = Budget Narrative
- Account = Budget
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- Each reviewer will grade your proposal and rank it amongst its peers.
- Places to focus or to be aware of: broader impact statements
  - Document & substantiate your vision
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Part VI: Managing Awards
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Types of Awards

• Grant
• Cooperative Agreement
• Subawards
• Contract
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Things to remember once your proposal is funded

1. Its not really awarded until the Institution receives an award letter
2. You (or your designee) needs to approve all expenses on the grant
3. You can only spend according to your budget; if you need to take funds from one category to spend in another you need prior approval to do so.
4. Reporting requirements are real and ignoring them is a good way to get black listed at a funding agency.
5. Timesheets are Invoices that document how you spend your time each month; they should be a true reflection of your workload in a given time period.
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