2020-2021 Collaborative Grant Writing Workshop Series

Session 4 – Proposal Review, Resubmissions & Awards

MINNESOTA STATE

MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

ST. CLOUD STATE UNIVERSITY

WINONA STATE UNIVERSITY

BEMIDJI STATE UNIVERSITY

Welcome & Ground Rules

Poll #1

- Co-Presenters
  - St. Cloud: Jodi Kuznia, Director of Research Development
    - Megan Robillard, Associate Director of Research Development
  - Mankato: Kristel Seth, Director of Research and Sponsored Programs
  - Winona: Brett Ayers, Director of Grants & Sponsored Projects
    - Katie Subra, Grants Specialist
  - Bemidji: Jenna Trisko, Grants Specialist
- Add your institution to your display name in Zoom
- Interactive Format
  - Ask questions as they arise. We will use breakout rooms for final Q/A.
  - Authentic examples, Useful infographic, and polls

Learning Objectives

- Understand the proposal review process
- How to prepare for a resubmission
- Know what you are accepting: notice of award
- Components of successful grant administration

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Proposal Review Process: Who, When, How

- Varies by type of source, and then also by agency
  - Check the Request for Proposals, or website, for guidance (timelines)
- Foundations, private funding
  - Pre-proposals are common
  - Committee reviews, board of directors
- State agencies
  - Staff reviewed
  - Can have a legislative committee process, i.e. Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund
- Federal
  - Differs by agency, i.e. NIH has two levels of peer review, NEH has a panel of 4-5 reviewers

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Resubmission: After the Review

- Read the summary statement
  - Then re-read it (and don't take it personally!)
  - Consider how to share with project team
- Contact the Program Officer and be prepared to discuss
  - What the reviewers said about your application
  - Scores, evaluation rankings
  - The likelihood of funding
  - The prospects of a revised application
- Listen to the advice from the Program Officer about options

Resubmission: Not Funded, Try Again

- You are in good company
  - High quality submissions, but limited resources
- Know your options
  - Next (realistic) deadline
  - Limited resubmissions, i.e. NIH
- Get advice, regroup
  - Assess best path for funding, different program or agency even
- Keep in contact with the funding agency, Program Official

Resubmission: Common Proposal Problems

- Lack of or weak impact
  - Lacks knowledge about best practices
  - Absence of data in need statement
  - Significance not obvious or weak
- Too ambitious, lacking focus, too many unrelated aims
- Unclear hypothesis or rationale, approach flawed, feasibility unsupported
- PI lacks a track record or appropriate expertise
  - Position yourself to be a successful grant writer

Reminder: Position yourself to be a Successful Grant Writer

Define your scholarly portfolio (*cutting-edge/innovative ideas*)

1. Actively contribute to your discipline

  1a. Publications (*first author or co-author*)

  1b. Present at local, regional and national conferences

2. Get involved with professional societies

3. Consider opportunities to integrate scholarly activity, publishing and teaching

Demonstrate you can get work done (*creditability*)

1. Define short-term and long-term scholarly agendas, and outline the roadmap used from project to project

2. Implement working relationships with populations/communities associated with your work

3. Identify opportunities to serve as a Co-PI or Senior Personnel for other grant-funded projects to build your CV/creditability

Become an effective grant-writer

1. Clearly define the problem you will solve and clearly define steps that will be implemented to solve it

2. Assemble the team and build the implementation plan articulating expertise within the team

3. Research and understand the funding agency you plan to pursue – volunteer to be a grant-reviewer prior to your own grant submission

Resubmission: Common Proposal Problems

- Doesn't adequately leverage institutional resources

- No sustainability plan

- Evaluation plan is weak or absent

- Doesn't address external needs or challenges that may affect the chances of success

- Budget expenditures are not justified

- Poor writing, too many errors
  - Information is missing or incomplete

Resubmission: How to be Outstanding

- Strong significance to an important problem
    - Clear rationale, focused approach, definitive results
    - Relevant and supportive preliminary data
- High degree of innovation
- Strong track record by a well qualified applicant with relevant publications
- Detailed budget, compelling justification linked to project goals
- Careful attention to details
    - Don't make the reviewers work extra to evaluate
    - Prescribed formats, common language
    - Spelling, punctuation, grammar, fonts

Resubmission: Revise and Resubmit

- Address all criticisms thoroughly
- Respond constructively
- Acknowledge and accept the help of reviewer comments
  - Can you address the reviewers' concerns?
  - Can you clarify things that were misunderstood?
  - Are there conceptual problems that you can fix?
- Don't be argumentative, abrasive, or sarcastic
  - Know that the panel changes from submission to submission
- Resubmission is an opportunity to improve the entire application
  - And you should start this early!

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- Components of successful grant administration

Award Administration: Notice of Award

- Legally binding document
- Identifies: grant number, recipient, PI, funding level, project period
- Sets forth terms and conditions
  - Understand overarching policies and regulations
  - Special consideration for the terms of award
- Signature/acceptance is done at the University level, i.e. authorizing signatory
  - This can be indicated by drawing down funds, i.e. NIH, NSF

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Award Administration: Keys to Success

- Understand the grant agreement requirements, award terms & conditions (re-read the Funding Opportunity Announcement)
  - Confirm budget amounts, project dates
  - Identify restrictions, i.e. doesn't support tuition assistance
- Focus on the objectives of the project
- Document procedures in writing
  - i.e. participant selection, scholarship process
- Review expenditures frequently: allowable, allocable, reasonable
- Keep records of conversations and approvals with the funding agency

Award Administration: Award Delays

- Late submission of annual/progress reports
  - Inadequate description of progress, inadequate plans for future year
- Out-of-date IRB or IACUC approvals
- Budgets/unobligated balances with insufficient justification
  - Carry forward may require approval, make sure to follow timelines and request requirements

Award Administration: Monitoring will Happen

- The funding agency will use a combination of monitoring activities
  - Drawdown screening, grants & agreement monitoring, transaction testing
- This will identify awardees for advanced monitoring
  - i.e. NSF does a risk assessment annually
- Focus on administration practices in need of business assistance
  - Desk Reviews – review accounting and financial management policies and procedures, obtain financial information submitted by awardees
  - Site Visits – selected as higher risk, can be conducted on-site or virtually

Award Administration: Prior Approval

Follow agency guidance for requests

- Submit in writing, or via email
  - Include necessary grant information
  - Further actions may be needed, i.e. progress reports, updated personnel documents, remaining funds, updated facilities and resources
- Authorized on behalf of the institution by the AOR
- Timeline for submitting, i.e. 30 days in advance
- Only official approvals are official
  - I.e. signed by grants office, system approved requests
  - Conversations with the Program Officer is a first step, but not the final
- Follow institutional policies as well

Award Administration: Prior Approval Examples

- Cost-related changes that result in a change of scope
- Transfer of substantial work that results in change of scope, or is to a 3rd party foreign component
- Deviation of award terms and conditions
- Pre-award costs incurred more than 90 days prior
- Change in scope
- Change in personnel: PI or Key Personnel status change
- Change of grantee organization
- Extension of 12+ months, or second year no-cost extension

Award Administration: Close-Out Timeline

90 Days Prior
- Confirm progress of work
- Review personnel on grant
- Review expense allowability
- Request no-cost extension as needed

End Date of Award
- Remove personnel
- Terminate subcontracts
- Perform final reconciliation
- Review final cost share as required by grant
- Resolve unallowable costs or overspending as needed

90-120 Days after End Date
Submit final reports:
- Final Research Performance Progress Report
- Subaward Reports
- Final Invention Statement
- Property Report
- Final Federal Financial Report

Award Administration: Close-Out Considerations

- Have regular communication with RSP/RASP, grants accountant
- Create a final plan of spending
  - Review all outstanding commitments, encumbrances
  - Confirm all final costs can be easily verified
  - Review all equipment purchased by grant to understand ownership

Award Administration: Close-Out Considerations cont.

- Review personnel and tuition paid by the grant
  - Make sure all appointments end at the grant end date
  - Ensure all time and effort reports are complete
- Terminate all subcontracts
  - Verify final invoice has been received, or will be within 30 days
- Perform final reconciliation of the award
  - Make sure questions related to the expenditures have been resolved
  - That cost share, as required, is documented

Award Administration: A Few Things to Remember

- Submit timely reports and requests
  - This can affect future funding!
- Be thorough in your explanation of balances
- Stay on top of compliance requirements
  - Public Access, Financial Conflict of Interest, IRB/IUCAC
- Make sure to follow the institution regulations & policies
- Don't hesitate to contact RSP/RASP, the funding agency, Program Officer

Wrap-up / Closing Thoughts & Questions / Survey

Contact us as soon as you get the funding notification; we can help!

- BSU Grants Office
  jenna.trisko@bemidjistate.edu
- MSU Research & Sponsored Programs
  507-389-5275 or RASP@mnsu.edu
- SCSU Research & Sponsored Programs
  320-308-4932 or
  ResearchNow@stcloudstate.edu
- WSU Grants & Sponsored Projects
  507-457-5519 or grants@winona.edu

Pop-up 4.1 - Mar 26 @ 11:45 am
- Panel Discussion: Grant review

Pop-up 4.2 - Mar 26 @ 12:30 pm
- Mock Panel: You be the reviewer!

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