WRITING (SUCCESSFUL) GRANT PROPOSALS

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WRITING

• Is NEVER wasted (unless it is terrible)
• Is USUALLY frightening (unless you are just doing something you’ve done before)
• Is ALWAYS hard (unless you are not trying)

“Do it.”

WRITING -- SOME TIPS

• Start early
  • Really – do what I say, not what I do
• Talk it through first
  • Know what you are going to say
• Have a plan
  • What pieces, when
• START EARLY
  • Worth repeating my personal failure

“Do it.”
Grant Proposals

GRANT PROPOSALS…

- Are NOT research papers
  - You are planning what you WILL DO, not telling what you HAVE DONE
- Are going to be read by a DIVERSE audience of (smart) non-experts
  - So it isn’t a good idea to shut them out
- Are going to be read by reviewers who have a big stack to read
  - So you need to catch their attention early
  - AND you need to help them do their job

GRANT PROPOSALS… NOT RESEARCH PAPERS

- Forward-looking documents
- You don’t have to KNOW everything – you need a good PLAN
- Clarity is VERY IMPORTANT
  - The committee needs to know what you are going to do, when and how you are going to do it, what the impact will be.
  - Don’t make them figure it out

GRANT PROPOSALS… READ BY A DIVERSE GROUP OF (SMART) NON-EXPERTS

- Non-experts
  - Don’t use jargon
- Think of a broad audience (may involve different parts of a proposal)
- Smart
  - Don’t ‘dumb down’ your proposal
  - Don’t try to hide something you don’t know

GRANT PROPOSALS… ARE GOING TO BE READ BY REVIEWERS WHO HAVE A STACK TO READ

- Make it easy to read
  - Use white space
  - Use paragraph breaks
  - Use subheadings
- START WITH A BANG
  - What is the problem
  - Why does it matter
  - What are you going to do about it?

GRANT PROPOSALS… ARE GOING TO BE READ BY REVIEWERS WHO HAVE A STACK TO READ

- FOLLOW THE CALL FOR PROPOSALS
  - Address the issues they want, hopefully in the order they want
  - Use subheadings to guide your reader
  - Don’t be afraid to duplicate language – if they want ‘aim and importance of endeavour’ GIVE them ‘aim and importance of endeavor’
  - The call for proposals (and any associated guidelines) should be bedside reading… your best friends… your favourite essays. Know them inside and out
SUCCESSFUL?

- APPLY
- But... here's the secret:
  - MOST WILL NOT BE (SUCCESSFUL)
  - Get used to it

SUCCESSFUL?

- Starting small isn't a bad idea
  - Look for non-trivial grants in your area
  - University grants
  - Association grants
  - Grants from governmental agencies
  - Gives you a track record

SUCCESSFUL?

- Build on your successes
  - How does this new project relate to earlier work?
  - How can you leverage your earlier projects?
  - How can you leverage existing team?
  - Partnerships
    - Who can help you with this project?
    - What do they add?
    - Think non-academic as well...

SUCCESSFUL?

- Perfect your "elevator pitch"
  - Explain your project in simple terms, in a couple of minutes
  - Try it on your mother... your teacher from high school... your best friend's little sister
  - When you think you have it, try it on some MORE people
  - It should be
    - Engaging
    - Easy to understand
  - This is your proposal 'guide'

SUCCESSFUL?

- GET YOUR FRIENDS AND ANYONE ELSE YOU CAN THINK OF TO READ IT
  - You want real constructive feedback
  - If they can't understand it - YOU HAVEN'T DONE YOUR JOB
  - Note you don't need to TAKE all feedback - but all feedback is helpful
  - Proofread, proofread, and proofread again
SUCCESSFUL?

- Knowledge Mobilization
  - Think outside the box
  - Why would they care?
  - Look for non-academic partners
    - Governors
    - NGO
    - Industry

SUCCESSFUL?

- Knowledge Mobilization
  - Look for opportunities to mobilize to various audiences
    - General public
    - Professional
    - Industry
    - Governance (policy)