

**FUNDING AND PROPOSAL WRITING  
FOR SOCIAL SCIENCE  
FACULTY AND GRADUATE STUDENT  
RESEARCH**

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# KEYS TO IDENTIFYING SOURCES OF RESEARCH FUNDING

## HAVE A SPECIFIC RESEARCH TOPIC AND APPROACH IN MIND

Know what you are looking for funding for.

Unlike scholarships and fellowships, which vary in the degree to which funding is tied to a particular discipline or specific plan of research, research grants are usually awarded for just that-- a detailed plan of work. Award agreements hold the grantee fiscally and substantively accountable for carrying out the specific plan as proposed.

Agencies that give grants specify what their goal is in doing so. Your job is to find the small number of agencies best matched to the project you propose to do. So, to look for grant funding, you need to have a specific project in mind. The more you know about what you want to do and how you plan to do it, the better job you can do of targeting the funding agencies that are most likely to be willing to support your work.

## BUILD A LIST OF POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES FOR YOUR PROJECT

In general, for any given research project, there will be only a few granting agencies that are interested in providing support. This means that the list of "best" agencies will vary from researcher to researcher, even within the same discipline. Part of your job as a researcher is to educate yourself about potential funding sources. Although you will get some help from others in this task, no one else can do as good a job as you can of making the determination about which agencies are best for you.

The process for becoming knowledgeable about potential sources of funding really is not difficult. You just need to become aware of what you need to do, start doing it now, and make it an ongoing part of your academic routines.

1) Scholarship. The best and probably easiest way to learn what agencies might fund your research is to find out what agencies are funding the research you are reading about in order to prepare for your project. When you read articles and books, look at the fine print to find out who funded the study (usually in credits on the first page of articles). If the information isn't there, contact the authors to find out.

2) Networking. Talk to colleagues (faculty advisors, speakers, etc.) whose work is at all related to yours to find out who funds their work.

3) Database searches. A third way to locate funding sources is through database searches. This method is worth trying, because it can potentially turn up sources missed by the other methods, but it should not be relied upon as your main way of locating funding. This method starts with a larger, less focused set of agencies (which is why it might turn up something you hadn't heard about), and this can make narrowing down to the agencies interested in your specific project difficult. Most databases available for such searches are far from comprehensive, and even full-text searches are hampered by the difficulties of figuring out what terms the funding agencies would use to describe your topic (as they most often do not use the academic terminology that researchers would use).

UNC's GrantSource® Service provides access to a wide variety of databases listing funding opportunities. The GrantSource Library, located in Room 307 of Bynum Hall, is a resource for UNC-CH faculty, staff, and graduate students seeking information on extramural funding sources for independent research, collaborative projects, fellowships, travel, and educational expenses. Library staff maintain the GrantSource® Service, UNC-CH's online collection of six funding- and research-related databases. The full text of these records may be keyword searched from any "unc.edu" domain computer, so users may search for extramural research funding from their own desktop computers. The Library also serves as the liaison between UNC-CH and the Community of Science (COS), a private organization which is developing a number of research-related databases, including information on current funding opportunities as well as research currently being funded by federal agencies, such as the National Science Foundation.

GrantSource Library staff are available for individual and group instruction in the use of the print collection as well as the GrantSource® Service and other online tools such as the research-related databases of the Community of Science (COS) and the Sponsored Programs Information Network (SPIN). They also provide ongoing technical assistance and consultation in use of these resources.

The GrantSource Library is open Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. No appointment is necessary and all services are free of charge. For information, call the library at 962-3463 or email staff at [gs@research.unc.edu](mailto:gs@research.unc.edu).

## RESEARCH POTENTIAL SOURCES TO DETERMINE THEIR APPROPRIATENESS

Getting the names of potential funding agencies that have a good likelihood of being interested in your project is the hardest part of educating yourself about funding. Once you have some agency names, you are faced with the much easier task of collecting additional information to decide whether the funding agency is a good match for your project.

Where to get this information? The GrantSource Library, 307 Bynum Hall has three sources of this information: (1) publications produced for the specific purpose of matching grant-seekers and funding agencies; (2) folders which contain application forms and guidelines, brochures, annual reports, etc.; and, (3) a variety of online databases of funding opportunities. In addition, most federal funding agencies, and some private ones, now have very informative pages on the web. Links to such web pages on public and private funding may be found through the GrantSource Library's web page at <http://research.unc.edu/oic/library.html>.

What to look for when trying to identify potential funding agencies: a match between you and the agency.

1. Does the agency's interest match what you are proposing?  
Funding agencies want to give away money, but only for projects that further a specific goal. That goal is usually well defined in the agency's statement of purpose or mission. Read that statement carefully and evaluate how well you think you can convince the agency that your project meets the agency's needs/goals.
2. What *kinds* of activities (research, demonstration projects, etc.) are funded?  
Sometimes you and the agency are interested in exactly the same topic, but you need money to do research and the agency doesn't fund that activity, so there's still no match. Most agencies specifically list the kinds of projects they do and do not fund. If still in doubt, look at the agency's annual report to see the kinds of projects that have been funded.
3. Are geographical limitations imposed?  
Some private agencies only fund projects in certain areas.
4. Who can apply?  
There may be restrictions in terms of when you got your degree, what discipline you are in, etc.
5. Does the typical funding range match your needs?  
This means you should have a pretty good idea how much money you will need to ask for to get your project done. If what you need is much less than the agency's average grant size, you might ask whether they have a special program for small grants. If they do, such programs often require less elaborate proposals and are reviewed more often. If you need more than the average grant size you might want to check to see whether the amount you are asking for will automatically eliminate you from consideration.
6. What are the proposal deadlines? Can you meet them?  
Most agencies review proposals only once or twice a year. You need to work back from the deadline to set up a schedule for getting a good proposal prepared. Don't forget that it will take from three to six months from the proposal deadline for the proposal to be reviewed and for you to find out whether or not you are successful. So your proposed project start date should take this processing time into account.
7. What format is required for the proposal? Are application forms required?  
Agencies vary a lot on this. The key thing is to follow the agency's instructions precisely. Usually, the guidelines have been developed to make proposal review easier on the reviewers (who, nevertheless, often shoulder a great burden). You want your proposal to be easy for the reviewers to review.
8. How are proposals reviewed? Who will be the audience for the proposal?  
The more you know about who the reviewers will be (in terms of their training and background) and how the review process takes place, the better job you can do of explaining your project to that specific audience.

9. Does the agency fund individuals?  
You will often see the statement "no grants to individuals," in the agency materials. This is because many agencies (for tax and accountability purposes) fund only non-profit institutions. This is not a problem. If individuals are funded, you may apply as an individual. The grant will be made directly to you and you will be personally accountable to the granting agency. In some disciplines, grants to individuals are quite common. In others they are quite rare. When an agency does not fund individuals, it wants an institution (such as your university) to be the recipient of the grant and accountable for the grant. In such cases, you as a PI apply through your institution for the grant. You prepare the grant proposal just as you otherwise would, but you must also obtain certain certifications from the institution (which wants to be sure that it can deliver on what you are promising). You need to be familiar with your university's procedure for processing institutionally sponsored grants.
10. What's the indirect cost rate?  
When a grant is institutionally administered, there is sometimes an "overhead" or "indirect cost" rate imposed to pay the institution back for the services it offers on behalf of the researcher. Some funding agencies allow indirect costs, and others do not. The amount they allow varies from one agency to another (from 0 to 70%). You need to know what amount the agency you plan to submit a proposal to will allow. This amount is usually figured as a percentage of the direct costs (the amount that you will need to carry out the grant), or some modification of direct costs. The amount you ask for from the granting agency is the sum of the direct and indirect costs. This has implications for #5 above. When you discuss grant amounts with an agency, you need to be talking about total costs (direct plus indirect).
11. Name, address, and telephone number of contact person for the agency.

#### ASSESS THE MATCH BETWEEN YOU AND THE TARGETED AGENCY

Write up a two-page description of what it is you want to do, the rationale for it, and why this fits the funding agency's goals. Come up with a ballpark total budget. Contact the program officer to get a feel for how receptive the agency might be to your proposal and to get answers to questions that remain. Then assess whether submission to that particular agency is likely to pay off or not.

Do contact the program officer to discuss your project before preparing your proposal. The program officer is the single best source of information about a grant program. Most program officers are very willing to talk to potential applicants. Remember that the program officer looks good and the funding agency's goals are met if applicants submit very good proposals. So you can expect that the program officer will give you good advice about how to strengthen your proposal and make it appeal to the sponsor. Of course, you want to do your homework first by researching the available printed guidelines. Be prepared to discuss your ideas in detail if asked. If given the opportunity, you want to make a good impression. These days, email can be a good way to contact program officers, and eliminates annoying telephone tag.

## UNC RESOURCES FOR IDENTIFYING FUNDING SOURCES: OIC AND GRANTSOURCE LIBRARY

307 Bynum Hall, Telephone: 962-3463

Hours: Mon.-Fri., 8am-5pm

Email: [gs@research.unc.edu](mailto:gs@research.unc.edu)

<http://research.unc.edu/oic/library.html>

Librarians: Jim Rosinia, Danielle Borasky

The Office of Information and Communications (OIC) is a branch of the Office of Graduate Studies and Research established to provide campus-wide assistance in locating funds for individual research, travel, and educational development. It maintains a library of grant-related information, including extensive files on federal agencies and many private organizations. The OIC also produces publications and public information about research at UNC.

### A. *GrantSource Library*

This growing collection located in 307 Bynum Hall holds reference works on grant sources and up-to-date information on state and national foundations, government agencies, and private organizations. The library's staff offers individualized help in locating funds for specific research projects.

### B. *Computer Databases*

1. The GrantSource® Service includes a variety of databases describing funding opportunities. The service provides quick, full text access to thousands of stored documents. As noted above, you can run GrantSource® from any computer on the UNC campus.
2. The Community of Science (COS) is a private organization to which the UNC system subscribes. COS makes available databases of current extramural funding opportunities, research being funded by federal agencies, and descriptions of faculty research interests and expertise across North America. COS also provides a search engine for the *Federal Register* and the *Commerce Business Daily*. A weekly "Funding Alert" service is also available for UNC-CH faculty.
3. The Sponsored Programs Information Network (SPIN) is another database of private and federal funding programs. As with the Community of Science Funding Opportunities Database, SPIN may be searched using controlled-language terms or free text.

### C. *Publications*

For the Office of Research Services, OIC produces several editions of the *Research Support* newsletter, a funding update which is issued several times a year. OIC also produces "Research News," a monthly column featured in *The University Gazette*, and *Endeavors*, a quarterly magazine reporting on research and creative activity at UNC-CH.

## PUBLICATIONS ABOUT FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

All of the publications listed here are available in the GrantSource Library, 307 Bynum Hall. These can be used to identify potential funding sources and to obtain additional information about sources identified by computerized searches or ones you hear about from other sources.

### Federal Agencies and Private Foundations

- A. *The Annual Register of Grant Support*: Covers both federal and foundation sources. Entries are categorized under subheads of ten broad subject headings, one of which is "social sciences". Entries give contact address, major fields of interest, types of support, statement of purpose, the federal authorizing legislation, eligibility requirements, fiscal nature of grants, average amount and range of grants, total funding available, cost-sharing stipulations, total number of applicants, total recipients, application requirements and deadlines, and names of principal personnel. Indexes include a subject index, organization and program index, and personnel index.
- B. *The Directory of Research Grants*: Grant programs from federal agencies and private foundations are listed alphabetically by the name of the program and are indexed by subject; sponsoring organization; program type; and, where applicable, by geographic restriction.

### Foundations

- A. *The Foundation Directory*: This is a sourcebook of foundations and their programs, listing about 5000 foundations (representing over 90% of both assets and funding awards). The foundations included are those with over \$1 million in assets or giving more than \$100,000 annually in grants. It has five indexes including broad fields of interest (e.g., anthropology, sociology) and types of support awarded (e.g., research, equipment, seed money). Entries are ordered alphabetically within each state and give information including purpose, types of award, contact information, number of awards, range of awards, limitations, publications, and application information.
- B. *The Foundation Reporter*: In-depth profiles of the 1,000 largest foundations (i.e., either \$1 million in assets or \$500,000 in charitable giving). Not indexed by topic, this publication is still a good source of information to complement that found in other reference works. Entries include financial summaries, biographical information on key individuals, summaries of new initiatives, typical recipients, application and review processes, restrictions, grants analysis (i.e., Total Grants, Number of Grants, Average Grant, Highest Grant and Typical Range), and examples of recent grants listed in broad categories (e.g., Civil and Public Affairs, Education, Social Services).

### Specialized Publications

- A. *North Carolina Giving: The Directory of the State's Foundations*: Gives financial data, trustees, sample grants, limitations and application procedures. Foundations are indexed by county and funding interest. There is also an index of officers, directors, and trustees.
- B. *Money for Graduate Students in the Social Sciences*: A variety of funding opportunities (e.g., fellowships, grants, awards, loans, traineeships) for study and training as well as for research and creative activities for all graduate-level degrees.

## UNC RESEARCH FUNDS

Each semester the University Research Council awards grants of up to \$4,000 to faculty members for research and publication. Information and application forms for these grants are available from the Office of Research Services, 300 Bynum Hall, 966-7757.

Junior Faculty Development Awards are available to untenured assistant and associate professors after their first full year of service. These awards fund a semester of research leave. The leave must be taken before the initiation of a recommendation concerning tenure, and before the sixth year for assistant professors and the fourth year for associate professors. For more information about these awards, contact the Office of the Provost, 962-2198.

Kenan, Pogue, and Reynolds Competitive Research Leaves are open to faculty with tenure who have been in the University for at least five years and have not had such an award in the previous five years. These awards cover the salary for a full semester, or half-pay for a full year, plus a research stipend of \$4,000 to be spent during the time of the leave. More information on these awards is available from the Office of the Provost, 962-2198.

Research and Professional Development Awards are available to tenured faculty who have not had a competitive research leave or off-campus assignment of one semester or more in five years and who have been at UNC for at least five years. Applications to be released from one semester of teaching for research should be made to the faculty member's academic unit. Chairs or deans make recommendations to a University committee for final approval.

Information about assistance for scholarly publications, artistic exhibitions, and performances is available from the Office of the Dean, College of Arts and Sciences. Preference for these awards is given to untenured faculty. The awards require a manuscript or article to have been accepted for publication. They are usually for \$500 or less, with a maximum of \$1,000. The chairman of the department must endorse each request. Contact the Dean of Arts and Sciences, 962-3082, about other criteria for these awards.

IRSS Faculty Summer Stipends are offered when funds are available. Approximately ten stipends are awarded each summer to support research by social science faculty in the Division of Academic Affairs. Stipends are \$3,000 for the researcher and \$1,000 for a graduate student research assistant. Preference is given to projects that are likely to lead to immediate publication or will lead to writing and submission of proposals for external funding. Application deadlines are announced each fall. For information, call Angell Beza, 966-2450.

For graduate students, several sources of funds are available through the Graduate School. Off-campus dissertation research awards carry a stipend of \$6,000 for one semester for off-campus dissertation research plus payment of tuition and fees. On-campus dissertation awards carry a stipend of \$12,000 for one academic year. Several fellowships are available for doctoral research in specific countries. Other competitive awards provide funding for travel and research expenses. Information about these awards is available on the web: <http://research.unc.edu/grad/funding/facts/unctable.html>

## **TIPS FOR GETTING RESEARCH FUNDING AS A NEW JUNIOR FACULTY MEMBER**

1. Start now building your personal list of potential funding sources. Working on this list is a career-long project. Remember, there probably will be only a few good matches for any given project; and each project may have a different list of potential funding sources.
2. Find out whether any of your potential funding agencies have special grant competitions for junior faculty. NSF, for example, has the CAREER (the Faculty Early Career Development) program, and from those, selects nominees for the Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE). The CAREER awards provide funding for 4 to 5 years, and range from \$200,000 to \$500,000. The NSF expected to make approximately 350 such awards in 1997.
3. Be on the lookout for small amounts of money for pilot projects. Take advantage of these to improve your research. Pilot projects can make a huge difference in reviewers' reactions to a larger funding proposal.
4. Check out institutional sources of research funds. Most universities have these, and most don't do a good job educating new faculty about what they are. Your first semester on the job, you should make a point of finding out what these are, who is eligible (some are specifically for junior faculty), and what the deadlines are.
5. Early in your first year, you also should find out how your new institution processes research grants and what the resources are in your new department or elsewhere on campus for helping with grant preparation and processing. The latter might be a good question for you to ask when on your job interviews. Some departments can offer substantial assistance, but in others you will be largely on your own. Also important are departmental resources for grant administration. Your best clue to the availability of these resources is whether other grants are being administered through the department. Sometimes departments don't handle grant administration because other centers or institutes on campus do. If that's the case at your new university, find out if you can make use of the center or institute resources.
6. Always be working on a grant proposal. With the burden of your new teaching and departmental responsibilities, your inclination will be to put off thinking about and working on your own research. This is a mistake. If you make finding funding opportunities and writing proposals part of your routine, you will constantly be making progress in your research. This is partly because the act of writing proposals itself sharpens your thinking about your research, and also, of course, because getting funding facilitates getting the research done. Also, remember that the lag time between applying for and obtaining funding is usually significant (six months on average), so if you hope to have money to do research over a summer, you must be working on the funding proposal in the fall.

# KEYS TO DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL PROPOSAL

Start **EARLY**.

It takes time to do a good job.

Choose sponsors that **MATCH** your needs and strengths.

Have an idea *before* you look for potential sponsors.

Know your needs and strengths.

**TARGET** your audience.

Write the proposal *after* you have identified the audience.

Different audiences may require different versions.

Know all you can about reviewers and the review process.

**EMPATHIZE** with reviewers.

Reviewers' job is to pick the best proposals.

There's pressure to avoid risk.

Reviewers' job is difficult--make it as easy as possible.

**A GOOD PROPOSAL DOES THESE THINGS:**

Gets the reader's attention.

Convinces reviewers that your project is significant--worth doing.

Conveys enthusiasm.

Impresses them with your perspective on the problem.

Reassures them with your technical and practical competence.

Provides a model of the quality of work they can expect in the project products.

Is easy for reviewers to follow.

Follows agency guidelines.

*You want the reader to come away feeling that the opportunity to support your project is one that should not be missed!*

**PLAN** proposal development.

Focus--keep it clean and to the point. (More is not always better.)

Pilot research counts a lot.

**REVISE, REVISE, REVISE**

Get others to give honest reviews.

Take criticisms seriously.

Make the proposal *easy* to follow.

## USUAL SECTIONS OF A FULL PROPOSAL

Full-length proposals often require substantial detail. Many agencies also require specific forms. Although the order and required length may differ, most full proposals require the following sections, or something similar. Of course, you should follow the specific guidelines of the agency where they differ from what is presented here.

- A. § Cover letter (make a connection)
  - § Title page (make the title communicate something important)
  - § Abstract (write it as though reviewers read only this)

### B. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Here's where you *get the reader's attention* and *give the reader a perspective on the whole project*--where are you going and why it is important or interesting. A good way to do this is by asking a question (which your project will answer) or by stating your general hypotheses. Focus. Be clear about the part of the problem that your project will address.

### C. LITERATURE REVIEW/RELATED RESEARCH

Here's where you get to *show your scholarly competence*. Be sure to include the most recent studies on the topic, including studies underway if you know of them. Explain, don't just cite, other studies. The point is to explain the choices made in your proposal. Be aware of literature in related disciplines (especially if reviewers might be aware of them). Demonstrate your awareness of alternative viewpoints.

### D. OBJECTIVES

Objectives translate the problem statement into specific, concrete, and achievable outcomes. Present each objective in one to two sentences in order of importance. State them as questions or as hypotheses (state directionally, if possible). Highlight objectives in some way so they stand out (put first in paragraph, bold, bullet, etc.). Objectives should flow from the problem statement and be fully addressed in the procedure section.

### E. PROCEDURE

The procedure section describes your population and sample, or site, or cases; the design or strategies to be employed; instrumentation and data collection methods; and analysis procedures. It usually also includes a work plan and describes the expected end product and dissemination plans.

*This is the weakest section of most proposals* because they fail to adequately address how the proposer will go about answering his or her research questions. Be specific. Specify the research operations you will undertake and indicate how you will interpret your results in terms of your problem statement. How will you collect your data (or what are its characteristics)? What techniques will you use to analyze your data? What tests of validity will you commit yourself to? Have you fully addressed each objective? Parallel structure (discussing objectives in the same order in which they were introduced in the objective section, for example) helps the reader follow your argument. This section gives reviewers an indication of how carefully and realistically you have planned and developed the project. If you find it difficult to write, you probably have not planned carefully enough.

Part of this section is the work plan--which gives a time and task schedule for major project activities. Allow plenty of time for data collection and report preparation (as these are often underestimated). Discuss expected end products and dissemination plans. (What journals might you submit to?)

## F. RESOURCES

In this section you should discuss personnel and facilities. Show that the person who will direct the project has the appropriate experience and training. Profile other key staff members. Customize these statements to highlight what is relevant for *this* proposal. Don't dilute with other, irrelevant stuff. Don't overuse consultants or you make your staff look unprepared to do the project. Do use consultants to fill in where you have staff weaknesses.

Customize your description of how your institution will contribute to the project. Things to consider are personnel support, computing facilities, consulting, space, supplies, telephone, etc.

## G. BUDGET

Your budget translates your workplan into costs. IRSS can help with budgets once you have outlined your workplan in detail. To prepare for budget development, you should have your workplan and know (1) the sponsor's likely upper limit, (2) whether cost sharing or matching funds are required, and (3) what limitations the sponsor puts on overhead charges (44.5% is the current federally negotiated rate--this is added to your bottom line).

The following costs should be included in your budget:

\$ Personnel costs: salaries and prorated fringe benefits. See <http://www.ais.unc.edu/candg/fringe.htm> for current rates. (Note: No hospitalization on faculty summer salary.) Post-docs and graduate students get hospitalization.

\$ Subcontracts and services: Official documentation is required.

\$ Materials and supplies: Items costing under \$5000. General office supplies are not allowed.

\$ Communications: phone and postage. (Only long-distance telephone charges directly relating to the project, not local service, can be charged. Routine postage is also disallowed.)

\$ Copying: If to be charged in the department, this goes under supplies. Copy center charges should also be budgeted as supplies. Print shop charges go under other.

\$ Travel: See your business manager (or Ruby Massey at IRSS) for current allowable in-state and out-of-state per diem rates. Per diem in foreign countries can be found on the web at: <http://www.state.gov/www/perdiems/index.html>.

\$ Equipment rental or purchase: Equipment is property costing \$5000 or more. If the cost is less than \$5000, the item is considered to be supplies.

\$ Other: Prorated graduate student tuition is now required.

\$ Indirect costs (overhead): This is 44.5% for most federal agencies (although some programs specify a lower maximum rate), and private foundations may specify lower rates or even disallow overhead. You must use the rate specified by the agency.

You should develop a budget justification that explains each budget item. Tell how you came up with the figure in your budget.

## H. ASSURANCES AND CLEARANCES

\$ UNC abstract form

\$ Internal processing form

\$ Performance based budgeting form

\$ IRB forms (if human subjects are involved)

## I. OTHER

\$ Appendices (if allowed)

# USUAL SECTIONS OF A LETTER PROPOSAL

A short proposal in letter form is used as the proposal format by some sponsors and as a preproposal or screening device by others. In both cases, the primary challenge is to write clearly and concisely. The usual sections of a letter proposal are outlined below, with examples. Be sure to use the guidelines specified by the agency to which you are applying.

## A. SUMMARY

Summarize in one or two sentences the entire proposal. Who are you [organizational identification]? What is your organizational uniqueness [claim to fame]? What do you want from the agency? How much money are you requesting? What major project outcome can they expect?

*Example: The Department of Sociology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, one of the nation's leading Sociology departments, requests your investment in a \$250,000 research project that builds the long-term infrastructure for advances in social science computing.*

## B. SPONSOR APPEAL

Why are you approaching this sponsor? [Do your homework to find out the sponsor's stated goals and past funding patterns.]

*Example: Because of the Gimme Foundation's demonstrated concern for democracy in eastern Europe, we are requesting your support of a proposal to [outcome] conduct a systematic investigation of the effects of ethnic conflict in the region on the democratization of agriculture.*

## C. PROBLEM

Summarize and document the current problem or need. Show how funding your project can help the agency reach its goal.

*Example: The two decades between 1990 and 2010 will bring changes in both the sheer numbers of elderly and their need for health services. The percentage of elderly is expected to increase by 30 percent during this period, and the percentage of frail elderly may double. The Gimme Foundation's concern with the empowerment of the elderly is timely. The project proposed here will investigate the degree to which two types of health service models--fee for service and HMO--provide elderly health care consumers with the greatest control over and satisfaction with their care.*

## D. SOLUTION

Describe your approach to the problem. Summarize your objectives and convey confidence that you can help solve [or shed light on] the problem as you defined it earlier. Unless precise methodology is requested in the agency guidelines, provide it in a one-page attachment by using a time and task chart.

*Example: College administrators face a growing problem of alcohol abuse on campus. Efforts to contain the problem are limited by a lack of understanding about its causes. This project will focus on identifying the motivations of heavy drinkers in the college student population. Four hundred moderate to heavy drinkers on eight campuses will be identified through a screening questionnaire administered to random samples of students in telephone interviews. The selected respondents will complete five hours of testing, which will include personality measures, specially designed measures of motivation to drink, measures of risk-taking, and questions about peer influences and family background. These will allow a multivariate analysis of the correlates of heavy drinking which should inform efforts to intervene and reduce alcohol abuse on campus.*

## E. CAPABILITIES

Establish your credentials to carry out the project.

*Example: The work proposed here builds on our previous analysis of the development of evangelical cults in Latin America. For example, in Smith and Jones (1993), we show that evangelical recruits come primarily from the working classes--especially in those countries that have experienced greater democratization. In the proposed research will examine the link between democratization and religious affiliation more directly...*

## F. BUDGET

Request a specific dollar amount for the proposed project and justify.

*Example: We are requesting \$65,000 to carry out the proposed work plan. This amount will cover two trips to South Africa and subsistence for two months during each trip for data collection, transcription of 10 hours of interviews, and a half-time research assistant who will be trained to apply codes to the data.*

# WRITING TIPS

## REMEMBER:

Your writing should be aimed at making it EASY for the reviewer to see the merit in your proposal.

Think about the questions the reviewers are trying to answer.

Your writing tells the reviewer a lot about you--originality, planning, clarity, care to detail.

## BEGIN TO WRITE EARLY

It can take weeks or months to prepare a good proposal.

Set deadlines.

Have a good second draft ready to go to informal reviewers 4-5 weeks before the proposal is due.

Leave time to think, plan, outline, write, revise, get comments, revise, polish, get administrative approval, copy, and mail.

## READ AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY

Stay within page limits.

Put information only where it belongs.

Use a checklist.

## PLAN THE RESEARCH

Work from an outline of each section of the proposal.

Prepare tables and figures BEFORE you write. Use them as a guide to organize your material.

Be sure tables and figures are referred to in the text and that legends agree with text.

## WRITING THE FIRST DRAFT

Try to write each section in a sitting.

First person is ok (but often can't be used in the abstract)

Let it flow--don't try to make it perfect.

Never assume the reader will know what you mean.

Be sure to let your enthusiasm for the topic come through.

## REVISING THE FIRST DRAFT

Think about accuracy, clarity, consistency, brevity, emphasis, style and tone.

Use a logical sequence of presentation.

Use parallel construction.

Don't use jargon.

Don't use "former" and "latter." It slows readers down.

Avoid ambiguity--misplaced modifiers, uncommitted pronouns, complex sentences.

Avoid irrelevant information.

Be consistent--abbreviations same throughout; don't use different words for same thing; uniform tenses; subjects and verbs should agree; sections of the proposal should agree with each another.

Separate clearly what you have done, are doing now, propose to do if funded, and hope to do in the future.

Avoid unnecessary words.

Don't begin a paragraph with unimportant words--consider impact.

Use simple words, short sentences, and short paragraphs.

Be positive--you are your best cheerleader.

## HAVE COLLEAGUES READ AND COMMENT ON YOUR SECOND DRAFT

Give them at least two weeks.

Have at least three people review your proposal before you write the final draft:

someone who understands your specific research, someone who understands science and research but does not know your area, and someone who is a good editor.

# CRITIQUING YOUR OWN PROPOSAL

## REVIEW CRITERIA (WHAT REVIEWERS ARE LOOKING FOR)\*

### \$ SIGNIFICANCE

The extent to which the project, if successfully carried out, will make an original and important contribution to [whatever the goal of the agency is].

### \$ APPROACH

The extent to which the conceptual framework, design, methods, and analyses are properly developed, well integrated, and appropriate to the aims of the project. *Detail* is important.

### \$ FEASIBILITY

The likelihood that the proposed work can be accomplished by the investigators, given their documented experience and expertise, past progress, preliminary data, requested and available resources, institutional commitment, and, if applicable, and, if applicable, adequacy of plans for the recruitment and retention of subjects.

## REASONS FOR REJECTION\*\*

Although proposals are submitted to an extremely wide variety of funding agencies, whose reasons for funding proposals vary widely, the reasons proposals are rejected are comparatively few. The following reasons are most often cited and can be used as a checklist in the preparation of the proposal. By avoiding these common problems you will gain a competitive edge over much of your competition.

1. The proposer failed to demonstrate a clear understanding of the problem.
2. The proposal did not arrive by the submission deadline.
3. Some information requested by the funding agency was not provided.
4. The objectives of the study were not well defined.
5. The wrong audience was addressed.
6. The procedures and methodology were not specific.
7. The overall design was questionable.
8. The proposal did not meet all terms and conditions specified in the RFP.
9. Cost estimates were not realistic (either too high or too low).
10. Resumes of key personnel were inadequate.
11. Personnel lacked experience or required qualifications.
12. The proposal was poorly written or not well organized.
13. The proposal was not organized according to the specifications in the proposal guidelines.
14. The completed proposal was unattractive.
15. The proposal did not provide adequate assurance that completion deadlines would be met.
16. Essential data were not included in the proposal.
17. The proposed facilities or other resources were inadequate.
18. The proposal failed to show that essential equipment and facilities were available.
19. The proposed time schedule was unrealistic.
20. The proposal failed to include the qualifications of the submitting organization.

\* Adapted from the NIH Peer Review Report on Recommendations for Review Criteria.

\*\* Adapted from Joel P. Bowman and Bernadine P. Branchaw, *How to Write Proposals that Produce*, Oryx Press, 1992.

## SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND INSPIRATION FOR PREPARING PROPOSALS

David R. Krathwohl, *How to Prepare a Research Proposal: Guidelines for Funding and Dissertations in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 3rd edition. Syracuse University Press, 1988. Good sections on preparing and submitting proposals, checklist for critiquing proposals, and writing tips.

Lawrence F. Locke, Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, and Stephen J. Silverman, *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*, 3rd edition. Newbury Park: Sage, 1993. Focus is academic, but the step by step guide to planning a proposal is very good. Good chapter on qualitative proposals. Sample proposals (experimental, quasi-experimental, and qualitative) at the back.

Dorin Schumacher, *Get Funded! A Practical Guide for Scholars Seeking Research Support from Business*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1992. Focus is on how university researchers can make rewarding connections with corporations. Good section on how to make corporate contacts (gives a sample letter, for example).

Liane Reif-Lehrer, *Writing a Successful Grant Application*, 2nd edition. Boston: Jones and Bartlett Publishers, 1989. Especially good for preparing federal grant applications.

Soraya M. Coley and Cynthia A. Scheinberg, *Proposal Writing*. Newbury Park: Sage, 1990.

Joel P. Bowman and Bernadine P. Branchaw, *How to Write Proposals that Produce*. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1992.

Lynn E. Miner and Jerry Griffith, *Proposal Planning and Writing*. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1993.

David G. Bauer, *The "How To" Grants Manual: Successful Grantseeking Techniques for Obtaining Public and Private Grants*. American Council on Education, Series on Higher Education. Phoenix: Oryx Press, 1993.

# THE UNC SIGN-OFF PROCESS

This is not the hardest part but many people think it's the most painful. IRSS can help.

## WHY UNC SIGN-OFF ON RESEARCH PROPOSALS IS REQUIRED

Because most grants are contracts between the granting agency and UNC (not between the agency and the individual PI).

Issues that concern UNC are outlined in the internal processing form (IPF).

## WHAT UNC SIGN-OFF CONSISTS OF

### What is routed:

Completed internal processing form.

A UNC abstract form.

A Performance Based Budgeting form.

Cover sheet required by the funding agency.

Your final proposal budget (on agency forms if required) and budget justification.

Human subjects approval certification (if required).

### Signatures required:

PI(s) (and faculty advisor if "PI" is a student)

Department chair(s)

Institute or Center (if applicable)

Dean(s)

Contracts and Grants

Office of Research Services

Allow at least 3 days before mailing deadline for sign-off process. Each person/office that signs keeps a copy. After approval, you need to make copies and mail the proposal to the agency.

## HUMAN SUBJECTS

Any research using human subjects must be reviewed by one of five UNC Institutional Review Boards (IRBs).

Approval is required at proposal submission time by some agencies. In all other cases the IRB proposal should be under review, if not approved, at submission time.

See booklet for what requires approval, levels of approval, and forms. The Academic Affairs IRB booklet is now on UNC's research web page: <http://research.unc.edu/ors/irb/index.html>.

IRSS can advise.

## OTHER ADMINISTRATIVE INFO YOU MAY NEED

Granting agencies often request information about the agency requesting funds. Most of this information is included on the Office of Research Services Grant/Contract Information Sheet. Go to room 300 Bynum Hall, or call 966-5625 to get a copy--or, you can find it on the web at <http://research.unc.edu/ors/applinfo.htm>.

Some funding agency form templates (including NSF and NIH) are also available from the web. See UNC's research page: <http://www.research.unc.edu/ors/forms.htm>.

## HOW IRSS CAN HELP WITH THE GRANT-GETTING PROCESS

- \$ ACCESS TO SECONDARY DATA (see [http://www.irss.unc.edu/data\\_archive](http://www.irss.unc.edu/data_archive))
- \$ REVIEWS OF PROPOSAL DRAFTS
- \$ HELP WITH TIMELINE DEVELOPMENT
- \$ HELP WITH BUDGET DEVELOPMENT
- \$ HELP WITH NSF FORMS
- \$ METHODOLOGICAL AND STATISTICAL CONSULTATIONS
  - \* BEV WIGGINS FOR INSTRUMENT CONSTRUCTION
  - \* GARY GADDY OR KEN HARDY FOR STATISTICS (WHAT TO USE AND HOW)
- \$ HELP WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS QUESTIONS AND FORMS
- \$ ADVICE ABOUT UNC SIGN-OFF PROCESS AND FORMS
- \$ IF WE ADMINISTER, WE'LL COPY AND MAIL PROPOSAL
- \$ GRANT ADMINISTRATION SERVICES AND A SHARE OF OVERHEAD (IF ANY)

*For more information about IRSS services and other campus research resources, see IRSS's home page <http://www.irss.unc.edu>*

### **THESE ARE FREE SERVICES TO UNC-CH SOCIAL SCIENCE FACULTY AND GRAD STUDENTS**

ALLOW TIME TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THESE RESOURCES