Proposals & Getting Funded

- Morning: The big picture
- After lunch: Proposals

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Choose project(s) carefully

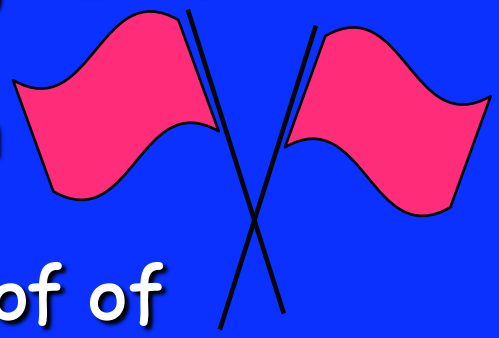
- It takes as much time to do research on a problem of low importance/interest as one that is of high interest/importance
- Cultivate interesting and important ideas (e.g.WORK!)
  - Collect ideas
  - Allow time for review, winnowing and sorting, revision and improvement
- Consider institutional expectations
- Build on institutional strengths

Build a portfolio

- Set realistic project budget
  - In most programs, the typical award size of a 'new investigator' project is not as large as that of veterans
  - Use smaller grants to
    - Build your experience & capabilities
    - Collect preliminary data
    - Build confidence in your capabilities
- Set realistic goals for # & type of proposal submissions
  - It worked for me to set productivity 'rules' and stick to them

Lay the groundwork

- Balance time spent on complementary activities of research, dissemination (publications and presentations) & proposal writing
- People (reviewers, panel members, program directors) need to know & recognize what YOU do
- WAVE YOUR OWN FLAG, when appropriate
- Collect key preliminary (e.g. proof of concept) data



Sources of support are varied

- Find the organization or agency with which your project goals align
- In kind, barter, scavenge, etc. can help extend available funds
- Ask successful senior colleagues 'who funded it?'
  - Within the institution, at funding agencies, at professional meetings
- 'Starter' pools & programs with high(er) success rates for new investigators & pilot projects
- Encourage research students to apply for research funds – success is good for both of you!

Know the program

- What types of projects are funded?
- What is the typical project budget? new investigator budget?
- Request successful proposal example(s) from senior colleague(s)
- Who are the reviewers? Volunteer to review
- Who makes support decisions?

Plan ahead

(Deadlines are closer than they appear)

Read the instructions & review criteria

- READ THE INSTRUCTIONS completely
- Print them out, highlight them and FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS EXACTLY
- If they are unclear to you, contact the program officer for clarification

Read the instructions & review criteria

- READ THE REVIEW CRITERIA completely
- Print them out & highlight them
  - Address EVERY point in the review criteria
  - Address 'hidden' points in the review criteria
  - Create headings that make it easy for reviewers and program directors to answer questions about the criteria!
- If they are unclear to you, contact the program officer for clarification

Write & submit the proposal

- The subject of this afternoon's session.

Keep typical budget items for your institution/project type handy

- Examples for illustration purposes (assume 50% indirect):

  Grad student /yr

  - $18K salary + 1.8K benefits + 6K tuition + 10K indirect = ~$36K

  Undergrad student/semester

  - $1.6K (10hr/wk) + 0.8K indirect = $2.4

  Post doc/yr

  - $35K salary + 10K benefits + 23K indirect = ~$68K

  Monthly lab consumables ~$500-1500 + indirect

  Etc……

Review process

- Possible levels
  - PI = > Program Officer = >

Reviewer
Reviewer
Reviewer
Reviewer
Reviewer

Program Officer = > Panel = >

Program officer

A successful program officer & her/his role

- Is a scholar in your field who knows everybody & is formative in directing the scholarship of your profession
- Coordinates & runs the review process
- Executes and/or makes funding decisions, depending upon agency policies
  - contrast ACF vs. NSF
- Oversees grants, budgets, etc.
- Solicits and facilitates highly competitive proposals for new ideas
- 'Their job is to help you, let them do it.' A program officer
- Is a busy professional & IS HUMAN!

Questions for the program officer about your project

(After doing your homework)

- Does your program fund this [previously described] type of research?
- What are the program success rate, typical submission numbers, and so on?
- What is the typical size of a successful 'new investigator' project in this program?
- What is the review and decision making process in this program?
- Are there special programs for which I qualify and how can I be considered for them?
- Are you aware of other agencies or organizations that fund this kind of project?

The Reviewers are

- Accomplished
- Dedicated
- Knowledgeable
- Conscientious
- Fair
- Over committed and overworked
- Underpaid for their efforts
- Tired
- Inherently skeptical
- Occasionally overly critical

- HUMAN, like, you and me!

MISC

- Volunteer to review and learn from the experience
- Ask a SUCCESSFUL senior colleague for pre-review
- Consider collaboration with a senior colleague
  - weigh pros & cons of collaboration with thesis advisor

Rejection

- It happens to everyone except those who don't apply
- Learn from it
- Interpret reviews thoughfully
- Be persistent, but know when it is time to move on

Professional Introduction

- Name
- Institution
- What interests you
- Why it is important