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BEST PRACTICES FOR GRANT WRITING
New to grant writing? Or maybe just new to a particular funder?
Use this cheat-sheet as a jumping off point as you begin.

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DO…

1. **Dig in to the guidelines**. Grant guidelines stipulate every element necessary to your proposal, including the criteria reviewers will use to *evaluate* your application. Ask RDS, Sponsored Project Services, or the funding Program Officer if you have questions about requirements.
2. **Contact program officer/ Foundation Relations.** If you are applying to a federal funder like NIH or NSF, email a 1 page summary of your project and ask for a telephone or video meeting to discuss your plan to be sure it is a fit with their program. Please reach out to RDS for feedback on your initial prospectus before sharing with the PO to get valuable feedback on structure, content, etc. If applying to a private foundation, talk to UO's Foundation Relations, as they are the stewards between the university and the foundation officers and help facilitate connections and introductions.
3. **Organize your narrative *and* yourself.**
    a. **Checklists**: Use one of RDS's checklists, ask RDS to create one for you, or create your own. Use the checklist to make sure you are 1) including all required proposal elements, and 2) to provide yourself a timeframe for completing each element.
    b. **Outline:** Map out the full narrative. Include each section and related review criteria required by the guidelines. If the funder has specific foci, make sure they are addressed. Create a logical flow *and* be sure to address every required element.
    c. **Headings in the narrative:** Write for the distracted reviewer. Reviewers have competing priorities when contributing service to peer review, so always use clear headings that match the wording found in the guidelines. (e.g., Overview, Specific Aims, Approach, Objectives, Outcomes, etc.).
4. **Write persuasively**. Grant writing is not expository. Your aim is to convince the funder that you deserve their limited funds more than the hundreds of other applicants do.
    a. **State the need:** Describe the current gap in knowledge and the value of addressing this gap—and the negative consequences of failing to address that particular challenge. Also persuade the reviewer that the gap needs to be filled in order to reach the specific goals of the funder and advance the field.
    b. **Sell yourself and your research:** Convince the funder that you are the best person to fill this gap in understanding. What experiences, training, and background make you particularly well-suited to lead this work?
    c. **Tie your project to funder's foci:** Make sure you are always showing how your project fits within *this* funder's own goals. A brilliant project for one funder might fall flat with another who has completely different research priorities or goals for philanthropy.
5. **Start early with UO internal processes**. Reach out to your Departmental Grant Administrator and Sponsored Projects Administrator immediately upon deciding to apply to an opportunity. Contact RDS for help along the way and to plan time for critique / edits of your proposal elements.

DON'T…

1. **Write as you would for a scholarly article.** Grant writing is persuasive and has a particular form and style. Use citations and data to support your persuasive argument that your academic field has 1) a gap in knowledge, 2) that needs to be filled, 3) you're the one to fill it, and 4) that the world will be a better place in a specific way, once the gap is filled.
2. **Assume the reviewers have the same knowledge as you.** Your research is specialized to you, and though reviewers should understand your area generally, do not count on them understanding the nuance. Define terms and acronyms. Avoid jargon where possible.
3. **Turn in a proposal without another pair of eyes on it.** RDS staff will happily review your material as many times as you like, with an aim of making it as strong a grant proposal as possible. RDS also has funds to support an external review by a *content expert* to make sure your research arguments and aims are spot on.
4. **Wait until the last minute to work on other elements of the proposal.** The research narrative may be the most interesting to you, but the other pieces of your application are often reviewed and scored as well. Don't neglect them.