Grantsmanship Refresher
Planning Your Strategy and Developing the Proposal

Prepared for Temple University

Presenter

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Grantseeking Strategy

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Developing Compelling Proposals

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GRANTSEEKING STRATEGY: PLAYING A COMPETITIVE LONG GAME

Start with a Strategy

A strategic approach to grantwriting is most effective over the long term.

Steps for grant funding strategy development:

1. Articulate your long-term goals.

2. Delineate the role of funding in achieving your goals.

3. Map out an ideal grant funding trajectory.

4. Make a plan to stay on track.

5. Work the plan.

6. Revisit the plan and revise as necessary.

In every grantseeking cycle, keep your long-term trajectory and "roadmap" in mind: how will this grant process advance your goals?

With the overall field in mind, survey the funding landscape.

- Who are the key funders in your field?
  - Federal, state, foundation, corporate
- What are their priorities?
  - Stated and unstated
- What are the overall funding trends in the field?
- Are their potential untapped sources of funding in your field?

Keep an eye on changes and trends.

Develop a Long-Term Strategy

Design a long-term strategy to build your grant funding.

- Identify individuals (or institutions) in your field who have had exceptional success with grant funding.
  - Retrace their steps: what contributed to their success?
  - Establish mentoring relationships if possible.
- Given the lay of the land in your field, map out an ideal funding trajectory.
  - Identify long-term targets. What grants will you need to get in the short- and medium-term in order to be competitive for these key opportunities?
- Create a concrete plan with action steps; implement it.
 - Revisit and revise this plan regularly.

Return on Investment

The return on your investment in grantseeking will be multifaceted; grantseeking is not just about money.

ROI from grantseeking may include:

- Grantseeking skills
- Relationships
- Prestige
- Money

Grantseeking takes time and energy. Be clear about what you are getting from each grantseeking process.

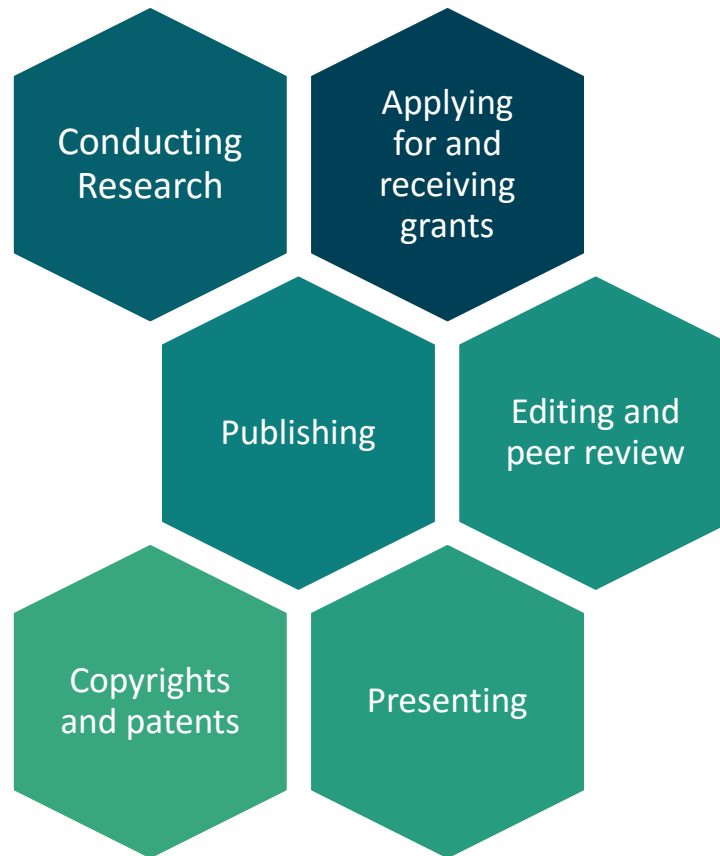# Survey the Funding Landscape: Difficulty and Payoff
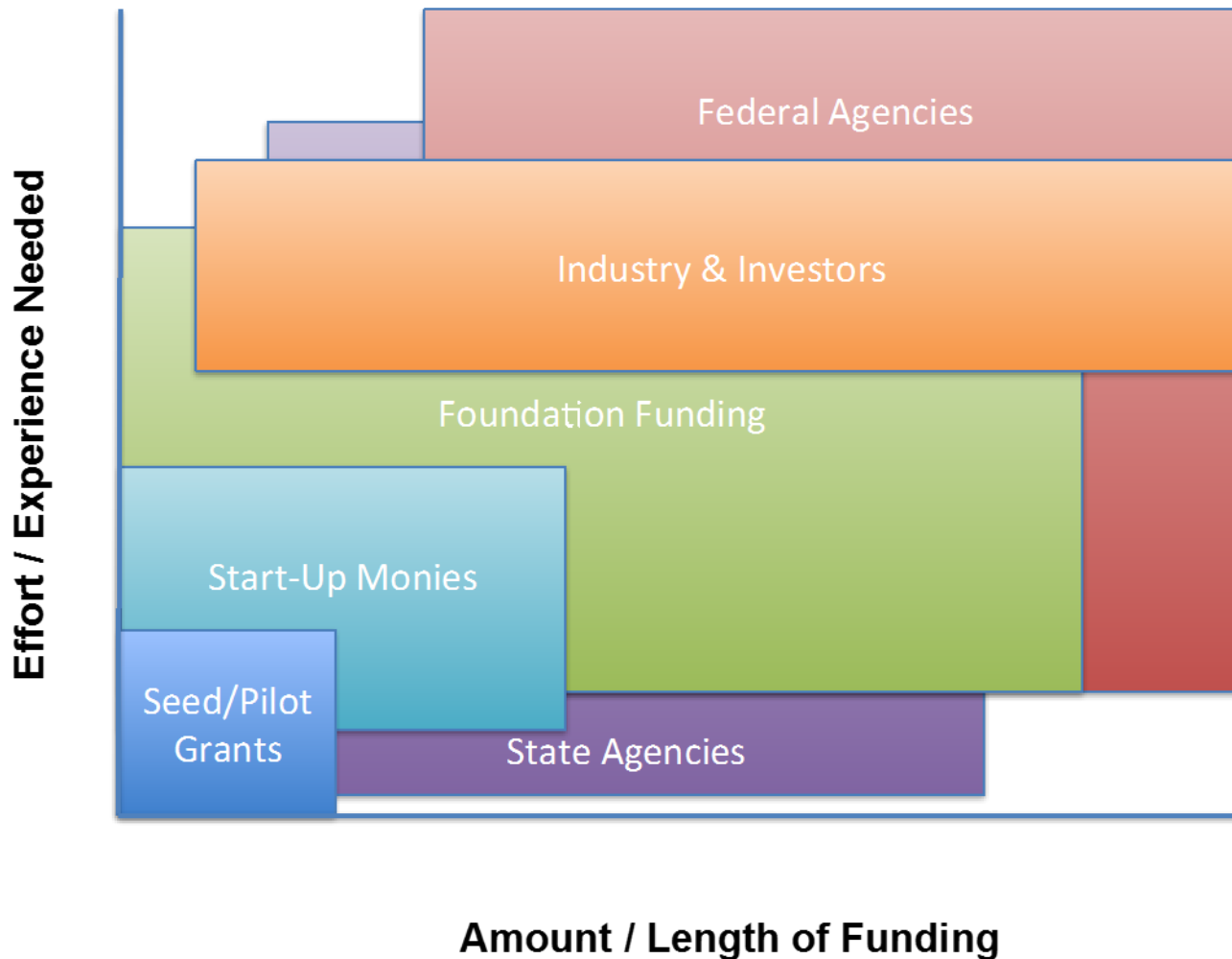
Grant-Funded Career

Four actions to take to improve your odds of being funded, now and later:

1. Start small, with pilot projects and internal funding mechanisms.

2. Publish, publish, publish.

3. Serve as a grant reviewer.

4. Apply!

Remember that you will build your grantseeking skills with each application cycle.

Areas of Focus for Leadership in Grantseeking

Conducting Research

Applying for and receiving grants

Publishing

Editing and peer review

Copyrights and patents

Presenting

Distribution of Effort

Focus Area	# Hours/Week	% of Total Duties
Conducting research		
Presenting		
Publishing		
Applying for and receiving grant funding		
Copyrights and patents		
Editing and peer review		

Grantseeking Calendar

- Set monthly goals

- Establish Action Steps to meet each goal

- Do this annually

January 2018	February 2018	March 2018	April 2018
Goal: ➢ Rewrite proposal for NIH March Resubmission deadline		➢ Submit resubmission ➢ Prospecting	➢ Write new proposal for NIH June deadline
Action Steps: ❖ Develop strategy and timeline ❖ Reach out to any collaborators ❖ Begin rewriting	❖ Complete Research Plan ❖ Revise Ancillary Documents including budget ❖ Collect updated biosketches and letters of support	❖ Prioritize funding prospects based on findings	❖ Develop strategy and timeline ❖ Reach out to any collaborators ❖ Begin writing

DEVELOPING COMPELLING PROPOSALS

Grant Competitiveness

Grant competitiveness is multi-faceted; pay attention to all the elements.

Key elements of grant competitiveness:
1. PI qualifications and experience
2. Established relationships and collaborations
3. Resources available
4. Responsiveness to funder interests and requirements
5. Rationale
6. Project design
7. Preliminary work

After reviewing all grantmaker guidance, assess:

- What are the funder's aims?

- How does your project accomplish these aims?

Refine your project design with funder aims, Program Officer guidance, and RFP requirements in mind.

- Make any necessary adjustments to the overall goals, objectives, and activities articulated in your concept paper.

- Plan the details of your project: What will be done? Who will do it? Where? How? How will you know if the project is successful?

- Ensure that your project plan follows funder requirements, and that your project's outcomes accomplish the funder's aims.

For a strong project, use a logic model to guide the design process.

Map out your strategy to develop and submit the proposal on time.

Create:

- **Checklist** of all required proposal elements
- **Timeline** for proposal development, including key dates
  - Note deadline for Letter of Intent or pre-proposal, as well as proposal deadline.
  - Allow time to get internal approval before submission.
- **Narrative Outline** based on the scoring rubric or key section headings
  - Note character-, word-, and page-limits, as well as formatting requirements.

Always allow time for derailments: plan to submit well before the deadline.

Strong narratives have similar core elements:

- Statement of the Problem
- Literature Review
- Conceptual Framework
- Hypotheses or Research Questions
- Methodology/Strategy
- Scope of Work
- Management Plan
- Staff and Institutional Qualifications

Note that each solicitation will require information to be presented in specific ways.

What makes a compelling narrative?

Good proposals come from good concepts.

Strong narratives answer core questions clearly and succinctly:

- What do you want to do, how much will it cost, and how much time will it take?
- How does the proposed project relate to the sponsor's interests?
- What difference will the project make to your university, your students, your discipline, the state, the nation, and other stakeholders?
- What has already been done, and how will your project advance that work?
- How do you plan to implement and accomplish project goals and outcomes?
- How will the results be evaluated?
- Why should you, rather than someone else, be selected to do this project?

The best proposals make the reviewers say "I wish I had thought of that!"

Statement of the Problem

Include a clear and concise statement of the purpose of the project.

For research grants, provide:

- Specific question(s) to be answered
- Brief explanation of the need for or significance of the study
- Explanation of how the results will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and the expected results

For program grants, provide:

- Statement of need, including statistics and qualitative data.

    *** Do not simply restate or paraphrase the RFP**

Literature Review

Convey your understanding of relevant literature and how the proposed study or project fits in context.

- Make it comprehensive but concise.
- Trace the central themes in the literature, highlight major areas of disagreement, and reflect a critical stance toward the materials reviewed.

Conceptual Framework

Identify theories or concepts that will guide the project.

- Describe strengths and weaknesses of the proposed framework.
- Show understanding of the theoretical perspective and relevance.
- Describe how or why they suggest the specific hypotheses or research questions.
- Connect your conceptual framework to your logic model, if applicable.

Hypotheses or Research Questions

Provide clear statement(s) regarding the research hypotheses (formal or informal) and key questions/expectations.

- Explain why testing the hypotheses or answering key questions is appropriate for elucidating the research problems.
- Be absolutely sure that your "hypotheses" are actual hypotheses—they must be fully testable and falsifiable.

Methodology/Strategy

Describe implementation methods.

- The description of the proposed methodology should contain enough detail to indicate that the applicant knows what s/he is doing and allow reviewers to assess both feasibility and appropriateness to the research questions.

- Include details for all procedures, work, and implementation protocols.

- Describe the instruments that will be used for collecting data, explain why are they appropriate for this study, and provide evidence of the instruments' reliability and validity.

- Provide detailed data analysis procedures.

Scope of Work

Indicate exactly what will be done, including the sequence of the proposed activities and the anticipated outcomes and/or deliverables.

- Specify the tasks, outcomes/deliverables, and schedule in sufficient detail.

- Include all activities necessary for completing the project.

- Provide a viable schedule for carrying out the tasks (work plan).

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Management Plan

Explain how you will manage the project.

- Indicate who will be responsible for each work component
- Describe how each element of the project will be coordinated.

Staff and Institutional Qualifications

Explain why your staff and institution are qualified to implement the project.

- Include discussion of the qualifications and experience of the proposed staff (be brief but comprehensive), including how they are qualified to conduct the project.
- List capabilities of the institution (applicant and/or partners).
- Where applicable, include information on facilities and equipment.

Typical budget lines include:

- Personnel

- Fringe Benefits (standard rates)

- Travel

- Equipment (durable, long-lasting, costs more than $5,000 each)

- Supplies (expendable, short-term)

- Contractual

- Construction

- Indirect Costs (note limitations)

- Other

It is often helpful to develop the budget in <u>a separate spreadsheet using categories that make sense internally</u>, and only "translate" to the grantmaker's required form after the budget is final.

COMPELLING PROPOSALS: WRITE THE BUDGET NARRATIVE.

The budget narrative **must be consistent with the project narrative.**

Tips for budget narrative development:

▪ Show a clear method of calculation for each item.

▪ Link each item back to grant activities and grantmaker goals.

▪ Use the same terminology that you used in the project narrative.

▪ A table can make the information easier to digest, even in the budget narrative.

Be specific!

Vague: The University will subcontract with a program evaluation company. Funding is requested at $25,000.

Specific: The University will contract with an independent professional evaluation service to conduct a rigorous program evaluation to verify impact and results as outlined in the Evaluation Plan. This cost is estimated at $100/hour and includes 200 hours of work plus $5,000 in travel costs associated with two site visits during the grant term. Total: $25,000.

Attachments vary by funder and solicitation, but often include:

- Abstract / Project Summary *(Write it last!)*
- Biosketches / CVs
- Quotations or documentation for specific budget items
- Detailed project timelines
- Letters of commitment or Memoranda of Understanding
- Agency-specific documents (e.g., NSF's Current and Pending Support)

Keep careful track of all your attachments!

Compelling Proposals: General Biosketch Tips

- Biosketches should be concise but cover all bases

- Adjust Personal Statements/Activities/Contributions to your audience

- Avoid using jargon

- Tell a story about you not about your project

- Should address:

  – Who you are

  – What you have done to prepare for this work

  – Why you are qualified, including any special accomplishments

  – What you will do next

After each element of the proposal is complete, assemble the final package.

- Review the package as a whole:
  - Is it internally consistent?
  - Does it follow all funder guidelines?
  - Will a reviewer be able to find what s/he needs in the package?
  - Will a reviewer who doesn't know you, your institution, or your work need any additional information to understand your project?
- Double check to make sure the package is complete.
- Obtain internal approval for submission.
- Submit the package **before the deadline date** if at all possible.

The Bottom Line

Successful grantseeking takes time and energy.

To maximize return on investment:

- Build adequate grant timelines, including time to:
  - Communicate with stakeholders
  - Create strong project design
  - Get feedback
  - Develop and refine the application
- Be wary of quick-turnaround grants.
  - Remember that it can be damaging to submit a bad proposal.
- Be strategic about the grants you choose to pursue.
  - Make sure each proposal process supports your long-term goals.

Grantseeking is a competitive, iterative process.

- Many grants aren't funded on the first submission.
    - For some opportunities, the expectation of resubmission is built in.
- Learn as much as you can from each grantseeking process.
- Reviewers' comments are very valuable: pay attention.
- A grant decline can be the opening step in funder relationship development.

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