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Building Your Research Agenda

Presentation for Marymount University

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Anticipated Outcomes from Today's Discussion

- Understanding the grants landscape
- How to get started
- Identifying funding opportunities & refining your concept
- Writing a competitive proposal
- Building your CV

Our Partnership: *McAllister & Quinn and Marymount University*

Washington, D.C.-based consulting firm

- Founded in 2004
- Secures funding for a wide range of colleges and universities

Expertise and Record of Success

90+

Experienced staff from colleges and universities, federal government, and nonprofits

250+

Grant consultants, subject matter experts, coaches, reviewers, and agency specialists

\$8.1M+

Secured from competitive sources for Marymount University



Common
Misconceptions
about
Grantseeking:



What's Out There?



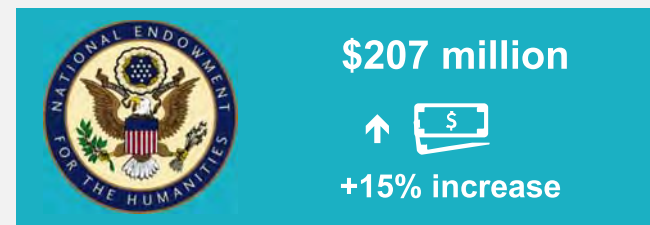
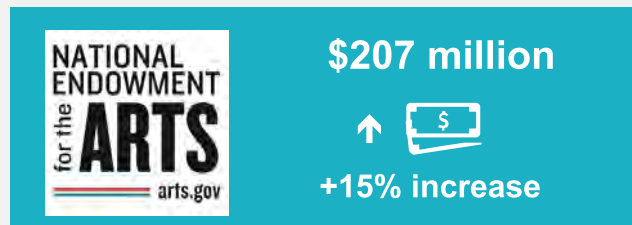
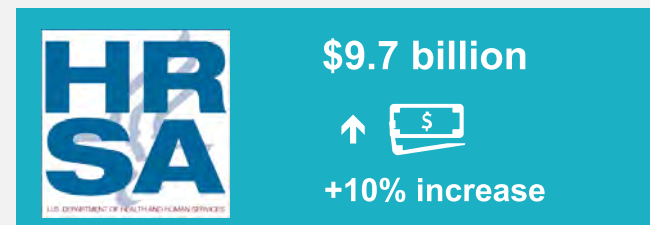
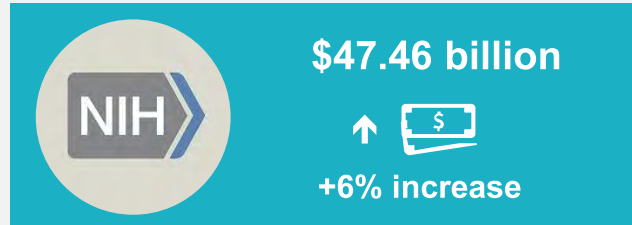
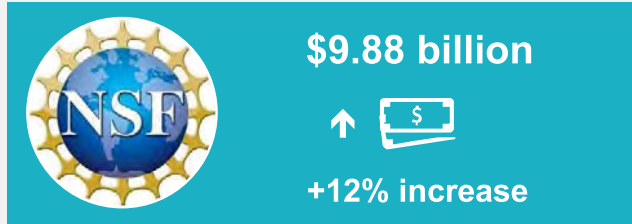
Foundations*	Corporate Giving*	State Grants	Federal Grants
National vs. Regional	Give Where Located	State or Regional Interest	National Interest
Board or Trustee Interest	Corporate Interests	Consortia or Leverage Other State Projects/Resources	Institutional Impact
LOI Process	Often Invite Only	Institutional/ Capital	Research/ Scholarship
Pilot Projects/Small Scale	Pilot Projects/Small Scale	Research/ Scholarships	Well-established Projects/ Programs
Reviewed by Program Officers and Board/ Trustees	Reviewed by Corporate Foundation or Marketing Department	Reviewed by Department Officials	Peer Reviewed
Limited Review Feedback	No Review Feedback	Sometimes Review Feedback	Always Provide Review Feedback

* Relationships are key

Federal Funding Landscape: FY2022 to FY2023



Budget increases for federal agencies funding IHEs



Impacts of the FY23 Federal Budget on Higher Education



Increased prioritization for MSIs and ERIs

\$280 Billion bipartisan legislation passed to fund STEM research and education

NSF new directorate and grant programs

\$1.7 Billion in Congressionally Directed Spending Awarded to IHE

What
you're
really
trying to
do is:

SELL your **good idea** based on a
critical need within their **MISSION**



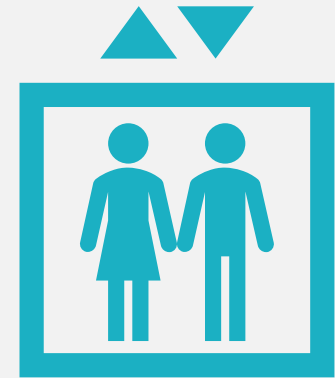
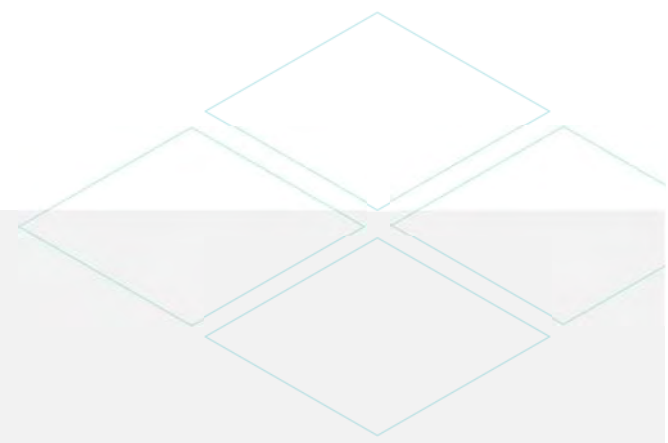
What's Your Hook?



- Do you have a clearly defined research question or area of interest?
- What is unique about your research (area of interest)?
- Have you reviewed the literature and found data to verify the need for your project?
- How will this generate new knowledge in the field or fill a gap?

The Elevator Pitch – Group Activity

- No more than 1 or 2 minutes
- Brief *commercial* about your project
- Must have a clear sense of:
 - Problem
 - Importance
 - How it will be solved
 - Why you?



Developing a Five-year Plan (Think Big, Start Small)



- What preliminary data do I need for my research?
- What will it take to get it? (lab space, students, etc.)
- Where will I get seed money?
- What mentors/partners will help me with this?

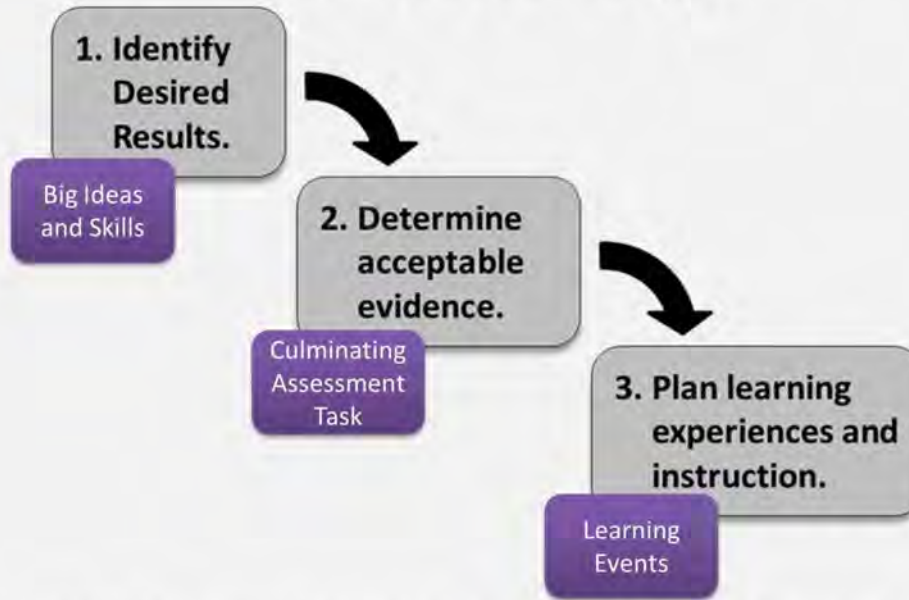
- What grants have I received?
- What are my major project goals?
- What strategic collaborations should I have?

- What impact has my research made?
- What/how much have I published and where?
- What am I known for?



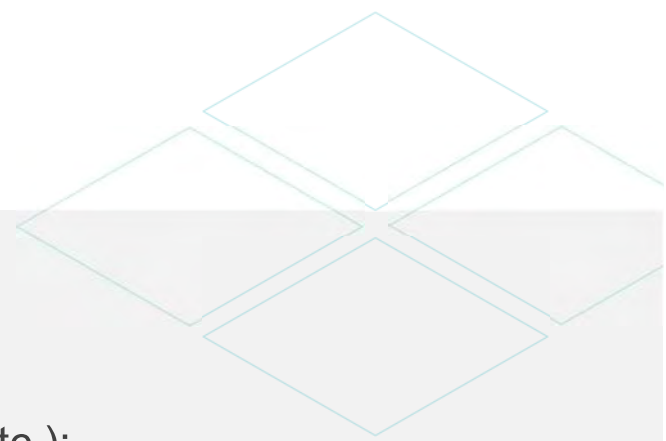
Developing a Plan Cont'd

Backward Design



Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development.

Identifying Opportunities



- Marymount SPO process
- Working with McAllister & Quinn
- Resources (search by key words, awardees, topic areas, etc.):

Websites	Listservs	Databases	Professional Societies
Grants.gov	Colleges of Liberal Arts Sponsored Programs (CLASP)	Pivot	American Association for the Advancement of Science
Agencies > NSF > NEH > HRSA	Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE)	Candid	American Council of Learned Societies
Foundation sites	Research Administration Discussion List (RESADM)	Others offered by OSP	American Educational Research Association

- Research previous recipients and funding priorities

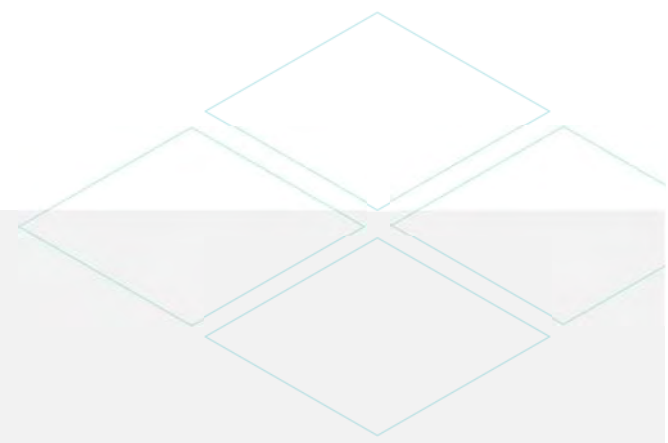
Engaging with a Prospective Funder: Grant Proposal Concept

- Determining where your research fits at the agency
- Finding the appropriate person to contact at the agency or foundation
- Crafting your **concept paper**
- Program Officer (PO) outreach



The Concept Paper

- A brief one-page document used:
 - to structure a funding request
 - to communicate with the PO
- In general you will communicate:
 - Introduction
 - Why the project is important
 - Brief project description

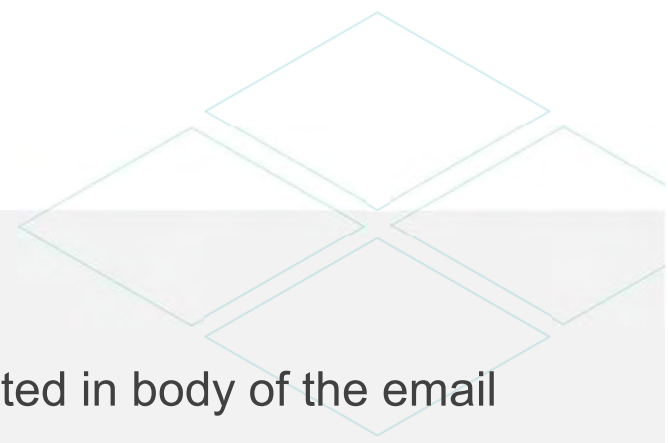


Vet your Idea = Talk to a Program Officer (PO)

Role of the PO

- Provide helpful hints on how to shape the proposal
- Redirect you to a colleague
- Discourage the submission

Sharing your Concept Paper with a PO



- Send introductory email
- Include concept paper (1-pager) as attachment or pasted in body of the email
- Best practice:
 - Ask the PO for feedback on the “fit” of proposal for their competition
 - Do not ask:
 - Who will be reviewing my proposal?
 - Is this project likely to be competitive? If not, what direction should I take?

Reading the RFP / NOFO / Solicitation / FOA

Things to consider:

❖ The program's purpose and priorities	❖ Deadlines and timelines for awarding decisions
❖ Eligibility	❖ Budget guidance
❖ Updates since prior solicitation	❖ Review criteria
❖ Grant amounts; anticipated number of awards	❖ Instructions for the proposal sections

Examples:

- [Academic Research Enhancement Award for Undergraduate-Focused Institutions \(R15 Clinical Trial Not Allowed\)](#)
- [NSF Secure and Trustworthy Cyberspace \(SaTC\)](#)



What will make your grant proposal competitive?

Aligned with the program's purpose

Compelling need and novel approach

Methodologically sound and evidence-based design

Qualified team with confirmed partnerships

Well-organized and compliant



Start Early (9+ weeks in advance of a deadline)

- Identify (and always start) with your **data** – establish a ‘need’
- Know your **literature** – Clarify the ‘gap’ and ‘evidence base’
- Bring in your **evaluator** – Ensure outcomes contribute to the evidence base
- Agency **registration**
- Engage **partners and collaborators**
- Clarify **expectations and roles** and develop a timeline



What are some common obstacles?

❖ A great idea/topic/area, but...

- *Project doesn't align with the funder's priorities*
- *Objectives and goals are not well defined*
- *Not grounded in literature*
- *Not sure it's innovative/how it contributes to the knowledge base*

❖ Worked with your strengths, but ...

- *Ignored weaknesses*
- *No demonstrated or compelling need*

❖ Put together a good project, but...

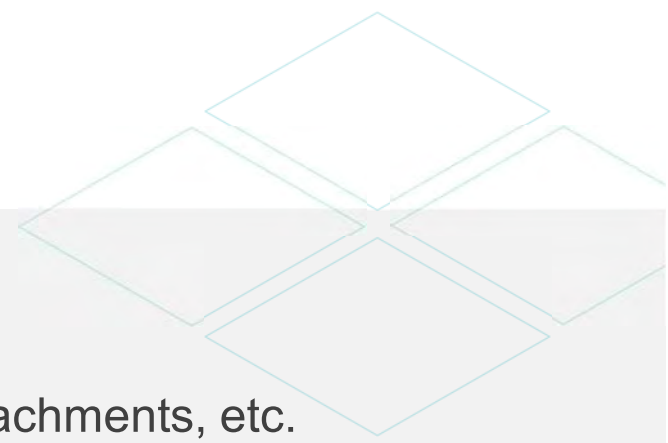
- *The budget does not align*
- *Not all of the required resources (equipment, space, expertise, money) were acknowledged and sourced*

❖ Substance is great, but...

- *Directions were ignored*
- *Proposal is difficult for the reviewers to understand and follow*



Sending Your Proposal on its Way



Submission

- Follow all instructions for forms, order, combining attachments, etc.
- Provide only what is requested
- Make sure the application goes through the proper internal approvals prior to submission
- Submit early, ALWAYS
- Coordinate reports internally

The Waiting Game



- Proposal review process
- What should I be doing while I wait to hear about the grant?
- Agency Stats:
 - It takes on average 2.3 tries before receiving first NSF award
 - NSF received 48,000 applications and funded 28%.
 - NEH received 4,400 applications and funded between 10-20%
 - Half of funded research proposals submitted to Federal agencies are resubmissions of previously declined proposals

Declination is Part of the Game



- Review Feedback
 - ***Agencies rarely fund on the first submission***
 - *Feedback improves the draft*
 - *Carefully read the review summary and comments*
- Revise and Resubmit
 - *Schedule a call with Janine, Jen, and Michael*
 - ***RESUBMIT!***



Best Practices

- **Do your homework**

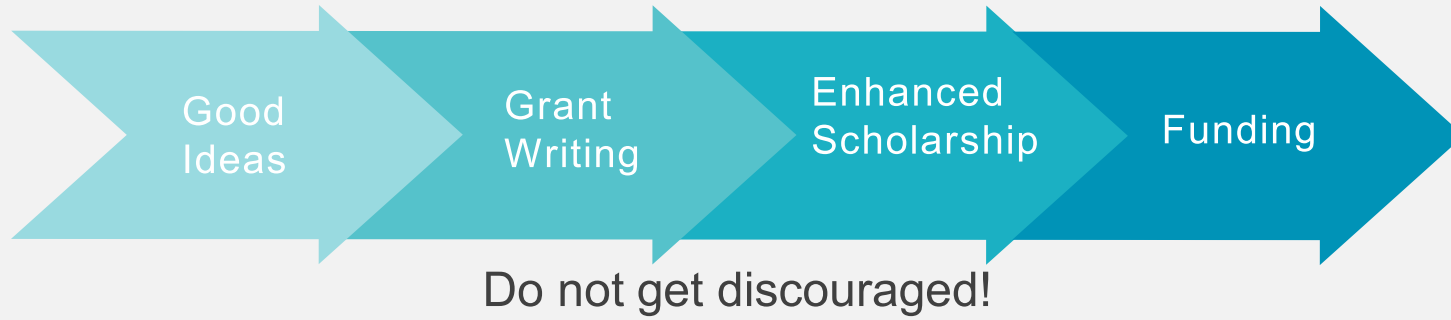
- Match the funding agency's mission
- Read the solicitation and previously funded proposals
- Write to the goals and objectives of the grant... not to the idea you think they will fund

- **Start early**

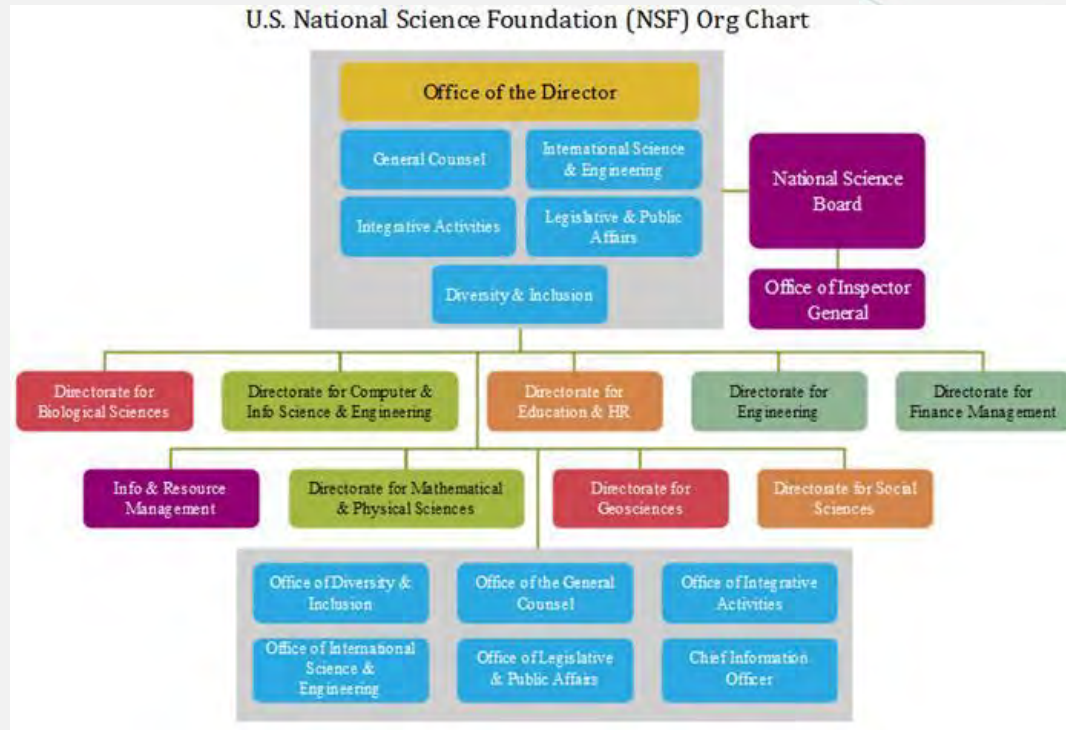
- Gather baseline data
- Literature review to identify gaps
- Define goals, objectives and/or aims before writing
- Identify the team and communicate frequently

- **Write to the review criteria**

Best Practices Cont'd



Become a Reviewer at NSF (or Any Agency)



https://nsf-gov-resources.nsf.gov/2023-05/NSFOrgChart_Updated_05_08_2023.pdf



Email to Appropriate PO



The screenshot shows the NSF website interface. The top navigation bar includes 'NSB', 'Research Areas', 'Funding', 'Awards', 'Document Library', 'News', and 'About NSF'. The left sidebar is titled 'Biological Sciences (BIO)' and contains links for 'Biological Sciences (BIO) Home', 'About', 'Programs', 'Staff', 'Funding', 'Awards', 'News', and 'Events'. The main content area is titled 'Developmental Systems' and features a 'CONTACTS' section with a table of contact information.

Name	Email	Phone	Room
Paul A. Krieg	pkrieg@nsf.gov	(703) 292-7879	E12335
Kimberly Gallagher	kgallagh@nsf.gov	(703) 292-2065	C12031
Steven L. Klein	sklein@nsf.gov	(703) 292-8417	E12322

1. Introduce your self and your research focus
2. Attach CV
3. Mention any previous funding or NSF panel experience