

## **TIGER TIPS**

# **RESOURCES FOR AUBURN RESEARCHERS**

*Article taken from Holly J. Krzesinski and Stacey C. Tobin*

The National Organization for Research Development Professionals (NORDP) works to develop tools that will assist research administrators and research development professionals as they work with faculty in their pursuit of research funding.

NORDP is an inclusive volunteer group when it comes to keeping members engaged and works to maintain a strong membership network through its membership forums. To learn more about NORDP visit their website: [www.NORDP.org](http://www.NORDP.org).

This year, several workshops were presented at NORDP's national conference in May 2016. One that was of particular interest was titled "How do I review thee? Let me Count the Ways." The article below is taken directly from the Abstract by *Holly J. Krzesinski and Stacey C. Tobin*:

### **How do I Review Thee? Let me Count the Ways**

While Elizabeth Barrett Browning counted 25 ways in which she loves her husband in her poem, "How do I love thee let me count the ways," we identified only **eight ways to evaluate the potential for success of a federal research grant proposal**. This may be surprising, as it seems upon initial glance of the review criteria used by various federal funding agencies that each has its own distinct set of "rules" regarding the review of grant proposals for research and scholarship.

Much of the grantsmanship process is dependent upon the review criteria, which represent the funders' desired impact of the research. But since **most funders that offer research grants share the overarching goals of supporting research that (1) fits within its mission and (2) will bring a strong return on its financial investment**, the review criteria used to evaluate research grant proposals are based on a similar set of fundamental questions. In this article, we compare the review criteria of 10 US federal agencies that support research through grant programs, and demonstrate that there are actually only a small and finite number of ways that a grant proposal can be evaluated.

Though each funding agency may use slightly different wording, we found that the majority of the agencies' criteria address eight key questions. Within the highly competitive landscape of research grant funding, new researchers must find support for their research agendas and established investigators and research development offices must consider ways to diversify their funding portfolios, yet all may be discouraged by the apparent myriad of differences in review criteria used by various funding agencies. Guided by research administrators and research development professionals, recognizing that grant proposal review criteria are similar across funding agencies may help lower the barrier to applying for federal funding for new and early career researchers, or facilitate funding portfolio diversification for experienced researchers.

## 8 Key Questions

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why does it matter?</li> <li>2. How is it new?</li> <li>3. How will it be done?</li> <li>4. In what context will it be done?</li> <li>5. What is special about the people involved?</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. What is the return on investment?</li> <li>7. How effectively will the financial resources be managed?</li> <li>8. How will success be determined?</li> </ol> |
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Key Question	Review Criteria Terms
Why does it matter?	Significance Importance
How is it new?	Innovation Novelty Creativity
How will it be done?	Approach Plan Methodology Objectives Aims
In what context will it be done?	Environment Resources Populations Facilities
What is special about the people involved?	Investigators Organization People Researchers Personnel Partners Collaborators Staff
What is the return on investment?	Impact Value Relevance
How effectively will the financial resources be managed?	Budget
How will success be determined?	Evaluation Assessment

They went further to connect each of the key questions directly to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), National Science Foundation (NSF) and National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) review criteria to show the connection between the key questions and the language used by each agency.

<b>Key Question</b>	<b>NIH Core Criteria<sup>a</sup></b>	<b>NSF Merit Review Elements<sup>b</sup></b>	<b>NEH Application Review Criteria<sup>c</sup></b>
Why does the research matter?	Significance	Intellectual Merit - Potential of the activity to advance knowledge and understanding  Broader Impact – Potential of the activity to benefit society	Humanities Significance
How is the research new?	Innovation	Creative, original, and transformative concepts and activities	Quality of Innovation
How will the research be done?	Approach	Well-reasoned, well-organized, rational plan for carrying out proposed activities and mechanism to assess success	Project Feasibility and Work Plan
In what context will the research be done?	Environment	Adequate resources available to carry out the proposed activities	Project Feasibility and Work Plan
What is special about the people doing the research?	Investigators	Qualified individual, team, or institution conducting the proposed activities	Project Staff Qualifications
What is the return on investment?	Overall Impact <sup>d</sup>	The potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes	Overall Value to Humanities Scholarship

“While the sheer number of non-federal funding opportunities makes a similar comparative analysis of their review criteria impractical, we suggest that the eight key questions emerging from our analysis provide a starting point for researchers, research administrators, and funders to assess the review criteria used by most, if not all, other research funding opportunities. This is reasonable given that each funder is trying to achieve the same goal during the grant review process: find those research projects that fit the funder’s mission and are worth its investment. Through this lens, the review criteria used for research proposals across agencies are easier to understand and address, which may encourage new investigators to apply for funding, and seasoned investigators and research development offices to consider a diversified set of funding sources for their research portfolios.”

For the full article click [here](#).