

# ***TIGER TIPS***

## ***RESOURCES FOR AUBURN RESEARCHERS***

### **Tips for Developing Proposals that Get Funded**

The key to any grant-winning effort is to develop a superior proposal based on a great idea that fits the funding agency's aims. Understanding the type of people who will be reviewing your proposal and making their job as easy as possible makes the difference between a good proposal and one that gets funded. Here are some suggestions for improving your chances of getting your project funded.

- **Follow the instructions carefully.** Provide all the information asked for in the application instructions in the order requested. Make a list of everything you are going to need and the questions you need to answer. Identify the data you need, the supporting documents, resumes, and required forms etc.
- **Communicate clearly and concisely.** State clearly and accurately what you will do, how you will do it and why it is important. Do not leave your reviewers guessing what you mean. Justify everything, including budget items, according to their importance to the project. Avoid jargon; no reviewer wants to take the time to use a dictionary to figure out what you are trying to say. Saying the same thing several different ways is also irritating to the reviewer, so avoid unnecessary repetition.
- **Become familiar with the funding source.** Find out what general trends and ideas, which are being funded during this process.
- **Be organized.** An informative abstract and logically presented narrative that uses headings and strong topic sentences mean less work (hunting) for reviewers.
- **Format for readability and attractiveness.** Do not right-justify; that makes it harder for a weary reviewer to read. Use headings, tables, charts and graphs etc. to break up the narrative and to succinctly present information. Use headings and underlining to call attention to important headings or words. Leave a reasonable amount of white space on the pages. Pay close attention to any formatting requirements contained in the application. Do not single-space if it tells you to double-space.
- **Early Preparation and Time Management.** Get the program announcement early, and analyze it. Obtain copies of highly rated, funded proposals. Develop a timetable for proposal development, review, and finalization to help you in managing the process and your time. Keep in mind that many funding agencies (including the federal government) utilize electronic submission. Please allow extra time to submit these applications since deadlines are firm within the systems.

- **Get feedback on your drafts from others.** Preparation will be easier if you work with a team. The team may include colleagues, Deans and/or Associate Deans, Researchers, Accountants, and support staff. Get feedback and suggestions from colleagues at Auburn or other institutions. Program Officers are frequently willing to read a short concept paper prior to the deadline and can provide valuable advice and feedback. Also, some programs have the option for preliminary proposals or letters. Take advantage of this, they can be very helpful.
- **Cover all the bases.** Make sure you provide everything the application has asked for and that you have anticipated and addressed any concerns that the reviewers may have. Remember that both your proposal and the reviewer are on the line.
- **Proposal deadlines are absolute.** If your proposal is late, it is void! Read deadline and mailing or electronic submission information carefully.
- **Learn from your experience and do not be afraid to reapply.** If your proposal fails to be funded, read reviewer comments carefully, talk to the Program Officer and use this information to improve and resubmit your proposal. Many proposals are funded on the second or even third try. Many wonderful proposals may have been turned down for various reasons not related to the quality of the proposal or personnel.

General rules of grants: Ask for only what you need, don't rush the proposal writing process, get to the point of the proposal in the beginning... not the end.