

# Grants 101: Introduction to the Grants Lifecycle

*Faculty Grants Luncheon*

*September 18, 2013*

# How Long Does It Take to Get a Grant?

Depending on the funding source, as long as

**12 – 24 months**

# Steps in the Grants Lifecycle

1. Concept Development
2. Prospect Research
3. Project Planning
4. Proposal Writing / Preparation
5. Institutional Approval and Proposal Submission
6. Waiting (Review Process and Award Decisions)



## Step 1: Concept Development

- Concretize ideas by answering basic questions:
  - What? (What are you going to do? What hypotheses will you test?)
  - Who? (You, obviously, but who else?)
  - Where? (What's special about Bates as a place to do this research? Or, where else do you need to go to get it done?)
  - How? (What specific activities will you undertake?)
  - Why? (What is significant about this? How does it stand out from what is already being done, or meet an unmet need?)
  - How much? (\$\$ - rough estimate)
  - How will you know if it worked? (and what will you do if it doesn't?)

## Step 2: Prospect Research

- Searching websites and other publicly accessible information
- Get OEG help in searching proprietary or hard-to-find information
- Make sure the fit is right
  - Read the mission statement.
  - Talk to program officers.
  - Read the RFP. *Closely.*
  - If at all possible, know who will be reading your proposal.

## Bates Support for Research

- Bates Faculty Development Fund: 3 deadlines per year; maximum \$10K/year per faculty member
- Phillips Fellowship: 100% salary for full year + \$4K travel funds, for projects requiring interface w/ outside scholars
- Enhanced Sabbatical: 80% salary for full year; application deadline November 15; requires submission of external grant application
- Indirect cost recovery: 33% to PI



## Easy-Access Information

- COS Pivot: Available from any Bates computer; off-campus access for those who sign up for accounts: <https://pivot.cos.com/>
- Acknowledgment sections of your peers' publications
- Websites of funding organizations (Note: Google hits will often be sporadic.)
- News media coverage (the more specialized the source, the better—usually).

## Harder-to-Find Information

- Private Foundations: Not subject to same transparency regulations as government agencies. Some don't even have websites.
- Are required to file forms with IRS (990) that give info about grant-making activities, but these are hard to find.
- OEG has access to resources useful for data mining on foundations and corporations.



# Talking to Program Officers

## What is a Program Officer?

- Responsible for oversight of grant-making activities in a particular field.
- At government agencies, will often be someone with research background in your field.
- At private foundations, may be someone with a research background, or may be a philanthropy professional.
- In most cases, they want to hear from you, to be able to get a sense of what is happening in the area of their interest.
- In most cases, they will try to be helpful. (And in many cases, they will be.)
- If you haven't done it before, ask OEG for advice. (We've talked to program officers many times, at many funders, and in Phil's case, he's even been one.)

## How to Read an RFP

- Read the lines—all the lines—with a highlighter in hand.
- Read between the lines.
- Words to look out for:
  - “Transform”, “innovative”, “novel”
  - “Mandatory”, “required” or “must”
  - “Interested,” “suggested” or “for example”
  - “Restricted”, “limitations” or “discouraged”
  - “Sustainability,” “dissemination,” “evaluation”
  - “Cost-sharing”

## Anticipated Audience

1. Program Officer
2. At government agencies and some private foundations, peer reviewers
3. At many private foundations: members of the board.

### Notes:

- Some gov't agencies pre-announce panels of reviewers (e.g., NIH study sections).
- Even when that's not the case, program officers usually try to get top PIs/scholars in field to serve as reviewers. Have a sense of what they would likely know (and not know) about your sub-field.



## Step 3. From Idea to Project

- A good project plan is the first step in developing a successful proposal
- There is no substitute for a good idea
- Organize stakeholders early:
  - Decision makers
  - Collaborators , advisors, mentors
  - Resource providers/subject matter experts
  - Performers of project tasks
  - Providers of feedback
  - Supporters/promoters of project
  - Users or beneficiaries of project results

# Project Planning

Project: Ideas are developed in response to definite *problems or needs*; problems or needs are addressed through defined and planned *practical steps (activities)*.

## Need vs. Problem, for different project types

- Need has accepted solution, problem more open-ended. Many projects combine needs & problems.

Project Type	Need	Problem
Basic Research	Presumed need to understand universe—no need to restate	Defined with reference to current state of the field
Applied Research	Describe the practical need in the world that could be addressed if a new problem is solved	Defined with reference to current state of the field as relevant to the need
Service Project	Describe the practical need in the world that can be addressed through established best-practices with new resources	No research problem: presumes that current literature describes established best-practices

## Project Planning

Every project has *goals, activities, and objectives*.

- **Goals** are the long-term, big picture questions that guide development of your overall project.
- **Activities** are the specific steps you will undertake to make measurable progress toward those goals.
- **Objectives** measure points intermediate between the need and the goal. They relate to specific activities, and indicate progress along the way.



# Collaborative Problem Solving

General rule: Identify potential *challenges* early, work to address them before they become *roadblocks*. Examples:

- Project needs a major piece of specialized equipment. Grant opportunity allows funds for buying it, but space is not readily available and/or item has special power supply / climate control / lighting / networking needs.
- Grant opportunity requires cost-sharing.
- If you get the grant, you will need to use grant funds to hire new college employees who will be on the project.
- NSF requires that data be shared with other researchers in a timely fashion, at no or marginal cost. Your project will produce a large dataset. How will it be stored and shared?

## Collaborative Problem Solving

More challenges:

- Project involves biohazards, chemical hazards and/or radioactive isotopes.
- Project involves human subjects research, requires IRB approval.
- Project involves vertebrate animals, requires IACUC approval.
- Your target funding source is one that has been identified as a potential funding source for a major, College-wide initiative.

# Collaborative Problem Solving

More challenges:

- Your project requires facilities, resources or expertise that cannot be found at Bates College.
- The funding source requires that Bates College partner with a certain type of organization (e.g. peer institutions, Universities, community colleges, community-based organizations, K-12 school districts).
- Your partner organization wants more money than you can reasonably budget.



# Collaborative Problem Solving

How to prevent challenges from becoming roadblocks:

- Communicate early, often and completely.
- Develop an “elevator speech”: Be prepared to concisely, in educated layman’s terms, explain how your project benefits Bates College and/or a partner organization, with reference to their missions.
- As much as possible, know what you want/need from someone before approaching them.
- Don’t just talk, listen.
- If partnering with another organization, it often helps to have an outline budget for the full project ready, to set parameters for maximum you can afford to give them.

# Good Housekeeping

Update your CV regularly.

- If you have collaborators, make sure they are doing the same, and get their CVs/biosketches from them.

Make sure your literature review is complete and up-to-date. You may not be able to cite it all directly in your proposal, but your argument and bibliography need to convey mastery.

- If you know who your reviewers will be, and one or more of them have published in your field, read what they wrote and be prepared to cite it.

## Good Housekeeping

- Many proposals will require some basic description of Bates College. Check with OEG for institutional boilerplate.
- Don't burn bridges. Many proposals will require letters of reference or support. And former advisors and collaborators can be good readers.
- Line up trusted readers: Experienced grant-seekers, experts in field, educated laypeople, OEG.
- Work backward from the deadline and set yourself a calendar. Try to include time for at least 3 drafts.



## Step 4. Proposal Writing / Preparation

Common proposal components:

- Abstract
- Statement of Need / Specific Aims
- Project Description / Narrative / Research Strategy
- CV / Biographical Sketch
- Budget and Budget Justification
- Facilities / Resources
- Letters of Support / References / Other Supplemental Documents

*All are equally important.*

## Proposal Writing / Preparation

### Features of a strong proposal

- Projection of confidence (without arrogance)
- Mastery of relevant knowledge
- Clear, logical connections between problem, goals, activities and objectives
- Plan for evaluating progress and alternate pathways to follow
- Significance
- Responsiveness to the funder's needs/mission/values

# Step 5. Institutional Approval / Submission

- Most grants are submitted and administered by Bates College on your behalf
- Office for External Grants completes and carries out the submission.
  - For Federal grants, we ask that you provide a completed proposal including all components at least 2 business days before deadline (4 days for NIH).
  - Process for private foundations varies depending on the individual foundation – could require more lead time, or more back and forth.
- OEG coordinates with HR, Accounting, Dean of Faculty's Office & anyone else who needs to know about your proposal, to make sure all College commitments have been pre-approved.



## Step 6. Waiting...

- Federal agencies usually *say* they'll respond in 6-9 months: time needed for at least one layer of peer review, plus internal decision-making process.
- Congressional budget uncertainty means we've seen waits of 12 months or longer.
- Private foundations vary widely: from 30 days to 2 years or more. Some have definite timetables and stick to them, others are secretive, dilatory.

***So what should you do?***

## ... and Waiting...

### **What not to do:**

- Fret obsessively, second-guess what you wrote in your application, keep asking OEG if we've heard about your grant;
- Forget all about your grant, make no plans for what you would do if you get it.

### • **What to do:**

- Identify alternate sources of funding for same or similar project;
- Develop new ideas into potential projects;
- Keep pushing forward, to the extent possible, on your research, publications, literature review, etc.

...then...

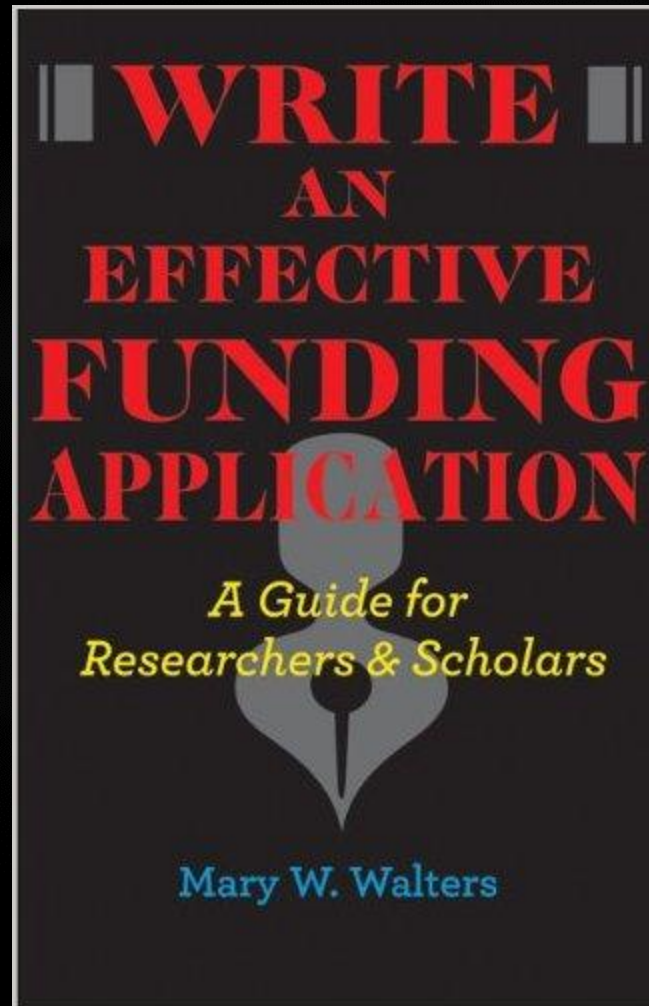
Did you get the grant?

- YES: Congratulations! Now get to work on the project, learn how to manage the funds properly, make sure you get your reports in on time, and keep applying for more!
- NO: Take a deep breath, read the reviewer comments, revise and resubmit (or, rethink your whole concept and start over).



# Recommended Reading

Mary Walters, *Write an Effective Funding Application*,  
Johns Hopkins (2009)



# Office for External Grants

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-Send us your CVs

-Visit us: Coram, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

-[www.bates.edu/grants/](http://www.bates.edu/grants/)