Successful grant writing
Getting it right

Critical stages of grant applications...
…you could consider the following steps

Generate an idea
- Why is this interesting and who cares?
- Who will benefit if the work is successful?
- How novel is this idea?
- Why am I the best person to do this?
- Can I realistically achieve what I claim?

Find a matching funding opportunity
- Look for funding opportunities
- Be aware, different agencies support different types of projects
- Scan for available calls
- Be willing to cast a wider net
- Think outside of the box. Keep your mind open

Background research
- Understand the different agencies and their styles
- Talk to the Program Manager – they are used to cold calls!
- Do the literature research. It can save you weeks of writing!
- Assume the panel members know nothing about your work, but everything about your competitors.
- Don’t expect the panel members to be experts in your field; plot your idea into context.

Write the technical portion
- What problem are you addressing?
- What have others done to solve this problem?
- What do you think you will succeed? What is your hypothesis?
- What is your work plan and what are your milestones?
- How will you measure success?

Check the administrative parts
- Read the call – again and again and again…
- Calls are usually specific about the formats they require
- Terms like “required” and “must include” should be adhered to
- Work on your budgets and other documents in advance – be prepared
- If you need external letters, give people enough time to get them to you

Submit and forget about it
- Allow enough time to upload the files and check pdfs for readability and errors.
- Many agencies systems get very busy during submission times – accept and prepare for this.
- Once submitted, forget about the proposal until you hear from the review panel.
- Make sure that the agency communications don’t get filtered into your spam folder.
- Many agencies will return detailed reviews. Use the review to revise and resubmit your grant.

Time and effort for a typical grant

Administrative parts
- Submission 5%
- Looking for a funding call 25%
- Administrative parts 10%
- Writing the technical narrative 35%
- Planning the proposal 25%

And remember...
- Always assume any problems were your fault, not the reviewer.
- If the reviewer has misunderstood something, then you did not explain it clearly enough.
- Make sure you invest considerable work and effort in any revision – reviewers will likely do the same.
- …and finally – good luck!

How to get published
What distinguishes a good manuscript from a bad one?

A good manuscript...
- ...in scope
- Investigate all candidate journals and find out about the:
  - Aims and scope
  - Accepted types of articles
  - Readership
  - Current hot topics by going through the abstracts of recent publications
- ...adheres to publication ethics
  - Avoid plagiarism of others’ work
  - Avoid multiple publication of the same work, never submit your manuscript to more than one journal at a time
  - Cite and acknowledge others’ work appropriately
- ...is in scope
- Publish your grant.
- Many agencies will return detailed reviews. Use the review to revise and resubmit your grant.
- Many agencies systems get very busy during submission times – accept and errors.
- You can find the Guide for Authors on the journal’s homepage on
- Make sure that the agency communications don’t get filtered into your spam folder.
- Once submitted, forget about the proposal until you hear from the review panel.
- Make sure you are equipped!
- Are you ready to submit?
- Roughly 35% of all submitted manuscripts are rejected before peer review. Make sure you revise before you submit.
- Do your findings advance understanding in a specific research field?
- Is your work of interest to the journal’s audience?
- Is your manuscript structured properly?
- Are your conclusions justified by your results?
- Are your references international/accessible enough?
- Did you format your figures and tables properly?
- Did you correct all grammatical and spelling mistakes?

Make sure you are equipped!

Illustrations
- Illustrations are critical, because...
  - Figures and tables are the most efficient way to present results
  - Results are the driving force of the publication
  - One picture is worth a thousand words.
  - Sue Hanauer (1968)

Use proper manuscript language
- Publishers do not correct language, this is the author’s responsibility
- Ask a native speaker or use a language editing service to improve your paper before you submit.
- Poor English makes it difficult for the editor and reviewers to understand your work and might lead to rejection of your paper.
- Be alert to common errors:
  - Sentence construction
  - Incorrect tenses
  - Inaccurate grammar
  - Mixing languages
- English language should be used throughout the manuscript, including figures, charts, graphs and photos.

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