

A CHECK-LIST FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

– Jeanne L. Narum, Director– ICO

1. Begin with an idea. Identify what you are passionate about:
 - in regard to contributing to your disciplinary community
 - in regard to strengthening the learning of your students
 - in regard to sustaining institutional distinctiveness
 - in regard to addressing a societal issue.
2. Think about the rhythm of your scholarly life for the next five years.
3. Put your idea down on paper, in embryonic form; share widely. Think about the ‘so what’ question.
4. Review your current resume. Think about the ‘why me’ question.
5. Develop a portfolio to document that your idea/project is credible.
6. Keep developing the portfolio, keep wrestling with your idea.
7. Step back, consider resources needed to complete your project successfully.
8. Identify resources currently available to you, on- and off-campus. Make a list of people who can help at all stages.
9. Think about funding sources: a) generally for a sense of deadlines and funding levels; b) specifically for timing.
10. Revisit your idea and study your portfolio. Arrive at a clear 200-word idea statement.
11. Start to identify specific funding possibilities.
12. Revisit what you now have in place:
 - a carefully-crafted goal statement
 - an emerging portfolio of supportive materials
 - an up-to-date resume
 - a list of resources needed to complete project
 - a growing number of people prepared to assist
 - a list of potential funding sources
 - a visceral sense of what timing is best for you.
13. Review funded proposals; study reviewer comments:
 - no evidence proposer has appropriate expertise
 - productivity under previous grants not persuasive
 - lacks a coherent goal

- cannot envisage an audience beyond a few experts
 - no institutional commitment
 - activities outlined are too ambitious for the time
 - array of topics too broad– superficiality is ensured
 - all requested information is not provided
 - fails to be respectable as a research proposal.
14. Revisit the ‘so what’ question. Consider to whom this will make a difference and how they will know.
 15. Think about what will happen if the project gets funded; if it does not get funded.
 16. Review guidelines, again and again.
 17. Write the middle section of the proposal: statement of activities. Share widely.
 18. Rewrite statement of activities, in the context of redrafting statement of goal and analysis of need. Share widely.
 19. Bake bread (not make sausage).
 20. Reread guidelines; give specific attention to reviewer instructions
 21. Be in touch with all appropriate institutional officials (grants officers, budget officers, institutional researchers, etc.)
 22. Think through appendices needed.
 23. Consider your writing, from the perspective of reviewer comments and the following list from *Scholarship Assessed* (Carnegie), that strong scholarship:
 - exhibits clear goals that are realistic and achievable
 - is based on adequate preparation that reflects an understanding of the field
 - uses appropriate methods that are appropriate to the goals
 - seeks significant results that will add to the field
 - is presented effectively, with clarity and integrity
 - demonstrates reflective personal critique.
 24. Think about this advice from NIH:

As with a scientific publication, you should present your research logically and clearly, and show that your research is significant. Explicitly describe your hypotheses and how they will be tested.

Be sure your project has a coherent direction, that the various sections are well-coordinated and are clearly related to a central focus, that there is a thin red line tying all the pieces together.

Be sure to allow for a thorough editing and proofreading. Ironically, many scientists who are extremely precise in their research procedures do not take the

same care in presenting their research. A sloppy application with typographical errors makes a poor first impression on reviewers. They may wonder about the care you will devote to the original research.

25. Make a grid of your project, seeking that 'thin red line' that connects goals, needs, activities, time-line and budget.
26. Review your 'so what' answer; determine how and to whom you will disseminate results/findings from your project.
27. Review your thoughts about making a difference; determine how and when you will gather data/information to document this.
28. Reread guidelines; contact agency staffers (maybe).
29. Prepare penultimate draft; ask non-involved colleague to review.
30. Bake bread again.
31. Prepare final draft; review it as although it were a freshman essay.
32. Mail, celebrate and wait.