BASIC GRANT TIPS

- Start looking early!

- Seek small grants first

- Search online funding databases regularly

- Know requirements specific to each grant

- Review funded applications as you prepare to write
BEFORE YOU BEGIN DRAFTING

- Gather background info about agency/foundation and its mission
- Be aware of and set deadlines for different parts of the application
- Familiarize yourself with word counts, length, formatting, eligibility, other specifics
- Ask for letters of recommendation
- Ask for language evaluations
GATHERING BACKGROUND INFO

- Who is funding the grant/fellowship?
  - Mission statements, key words

- What is the goal of this particular grant?
  - Expected results, types of candidates

- What types of projects has the grant funded in the past?
  - Quantitative or qualitative?
  - Theory building or policymaking?
  - Which disciplines?

- What are the selection criteria?
  - Often links with mission statements

- Who reads the applications?
  - Know your audience

- When is the grant typically due?
Proposal writing is a genre unto itself

Your proposal will not contain your most beautiful or elegant prose, but it should contain some of the clearest, most lucid prose you will ever produce.

Generic conventions of proposal writing include:

- direct, clear, up-front language
- avoidance of jargon so that the proposal is understandable to educated but non-initiated reader-reviewers
- repetition of your main objective/question and why it’s important
- self-referentiality
- readability/skimmability
- salesmanship
- a singular plan that is feasible and draws on your personal strengths/training
Try your best to avoid
- contractions
- repeated "I + verb" constructions, especially as lead sentences
- passive voice
- conditional verbs
- forms of the verb “to be”
- frequent “there is” and “there are” statements
- overly long sentences

Strive for
- consistency in voice
- careful word choice to show fit between different components of your app
- clear, confident statements
- active constructions
CONFIDENT PROSE

Instead of conditionals like can, could, would, hope to

Use strong verbs of intent like plan, envision, imagine, seek to

I would like to attend the Summer Language Workshop

By attending the Summer Language Workshop, I will
ACTIVE VERBS

- Identify
- Assess
- Contrast
- Apply
- Examine
- Employ
- Illustrate
- Debate
- Integrate
- Predict
- Suggest
- Measure
- Distinguish

- Infer
- Synthesize
- Differentiate
- Translate
- Revise
- Generalize
- Evaluate
- Appraise
- Compose
- Collect
- Complete
- Deduce

- Estimated
- Gathered
- Instructed
- Assembled
- Detected
- Created
- Initiated
- Illustrated
- Guided
- Classified
- Compiled
- Critiqued
- Generated
- Hypothesized
THE ROLE OF SALESMANSHIP

- Different grants, different pitches

- Talk up your qualifications and competencies
  - Previous training
  - Coursework
  - Languages
  - Special achievements

- What is significant about your research?
  - Why is it important to scholarship in and out of your field?
    - tests an important theory
    - moves toward policy change
    - fills a hole in the literature
  - Why is it important to funders?
    - helps fulfill their explicit mission
THE MAJOR POINTS EVERY PROPOSAL SHOULD ADDRESS

What we will learn as the result of the proposed project

Why it is worth knowing

How we will know that the conclusions are valid

Why you should be the one to conduct the study
ORGANIZING A PROPOSAL

- Hook
- Project Overview
- Research Questions
- Literature Review
- Methods
- Academic Background/Preparation
- Expected Results and Broader Impacts
THE HOOK

- Grab the reader’s attention with a
  - stimulating question
  - challenging problem/enigma
  - provocative statistic

- Put the “what” and “why” up front
  - A good proposal emerges from a clear idea of the project goals and why they are significant

- The central issue should stick in the reader’s mind an hour later

Workers do not organize unions; unions organize workers.

Population growth coupled with loss of arable land poses a threat to food security in the next decade.

Are strong party systems conducive to democratic stability?

Was the decline of population growth in Brazil the result of government policies?
PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Open with
  - Hook
  - “This research project…”

- Craft as a micro-level representation of the main components of your project and your proposal

- Be wary of including citations to other work in this section
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Craft a clear hypothesis
- Avoid foregone conclusions
- Avoid long list of questions
  - Three usually suffice
- Number, bullet, boldface, or italicize
Not all grants require full literature reviews, but almost all require that you show knowledge of your field:
- Who else has asked questions similar to yours?
- What did they find?
- What didn’t they look into?
- Where does your work build off of and add to previous scholarship?
- What is the broader significance of your work to people outside your specific area/discipline?

Tailor to specific agency and its goals:
- SSRC IDRF focuses on humanities-based social sciences (interdisciplinarity), Wenner-Gren on anthropological theory.
- Avoid citing many secondary sources outside your lit review.
**METHODS**

- Amount of detail depends on the specific grant

- Link methods explicitly to research questions
  - Why is a particular method the best way to answer a particular question?

- Address feasibility
  - Think carefully about time frame, personal skillset, environment, any likely obstacles (e.g., internet access)

- Methods sections often include timelines
  - e.g., “From January to March, I will conduct fifteen semi-structured interviews with . . .”
  - “The first phase of my project . . .”
ACADEMIC BACKGROUND/PREPARATION

- Coursework

- Previous research on topic
  - When and where have you been for previous research related to this project?
  - What did you learn?

- Contacts and affiliations
  - Name names if you can

- Language training (if applicable)
  - “I have a high-advanced proficiency in Mandarin”
  - What can you do with your language?
CONCLUSIONS AND BROADER IMPACTS

- Re-address the importance of the project

- How is your project innovative?

- Re-emphasize your merits and connect the grant to your future goals:
  - “I will do X, Y, and Z upon finishing my studies or after the grant period”

- State the impacts of the grant on your personal/professional trajectory

- Note impacts on the mission of the funder and also on your field and scholarship more broadly
  - What is “important” depends in large part on the funder and its goals
Circulate your proposal for feedback

- ADVISORS, colleagues, friends, GGC, past winners of this fellowship
- Choose readers in accordance with particular grant (e.g., NSF v. Fulbright)
- Account for lots of time to review longer proposals (especially during summer)

Try explaining to others (orally) what the project will accomplish and why it’s important

- Critical feedback is good feedback
- Write and re-write based on the various critiques you receive
HOW THE GRADGRANTS CENTER CAN HELP

- In-person appointments
  - Email gradgrnt@indiana.edu
  - Provide GGC with draft materials 48 hours in advance of consultation

- Brainstorming, drafting, editing grant proposals
  - Either in-person or electronically via email or Skype

- Searches for external (non-IU) funding opportunities
WEEKLY WALK-IN HOURS

- 12:00pm to 2:00pm, Tuesdays & Fridays
- Wells Library, Room 544E (5th floor, East Tower)
- Internal and external grants, funding searches, and general questions
GCC FALL 2016 WORKSHOP SERIES

The Art of Writing a Personal Statement
October 12, 1:00–2:00pm

Budgeting for Research
October 27, 3:00–4:00pm

All workshops will be in Social Science Research Commons,
Woodburn 200

Each followed by a Walk-In Hour for individual questions
CONTACT THE GGC

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