



CONNECTING WITH FUNDERS

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture- 10 June 2021

YOUR PRESENTER



MICHELLE FRANK, PhD

GRANTS CONSULTANT

Ph.D., Physiology
University of Wisconsin-Madison

TOTAL WINS

>\$8M to small
businesses & individual
investigators

- Joined Hanover in 2019
- >8 years of grants consulting experience
- Started writing grants as a graduate student

SPECIALIZES IN



On a personal note...



HIKING



COOKING AND FOOD BLOGGING



BREWING

A QUICK POLL


CONNECTING WITH FUNDERS

AGENDA

- First step: the pitch
- Connect with funders
- Q & A



STEP 1: THE PITCH



There is a misconception among grantseekers that selling happens primarily at the proposal stage.

This misconception leads to innumerable failed proposals and frustrated grantseekers.

THE PITCH IS KEY!

CRAFT A COMPELLING PITCH

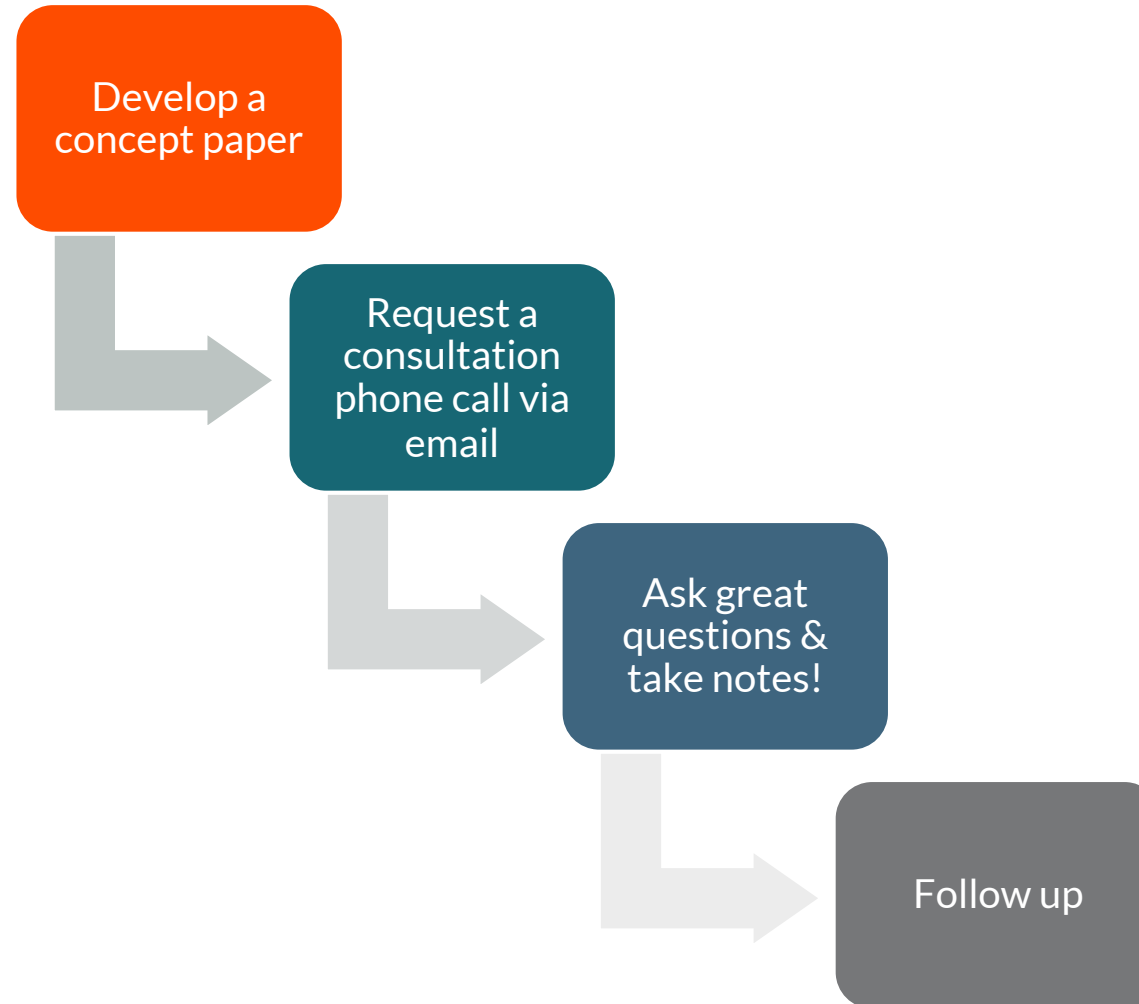
Pitching saves time and effort and makes you **more competitive**.

- Many funders prefer to provide feedback well in advance of proposal submission.
- In most cases, you need to sell your project to the funder before you submit a proposal.

A full proposal should not be the first a funder hears of your project!

THE PITCH

CONCEPT PAPER



WHAT IS A CONCEPT PAPER?

Summary of key elements of a funding request: the idea “in a nutshell”

- Written in the first person
- Explicitly related to the goals of the funder
- Written in a style appropriate to the funder
- Generally reflective of the structure of a full proposal

THE CONCEPT PAPER

CRAFT A COMPELLING PITCH

A short concept paper is a tool for pitching your project to funders.

- Targeting a major funder (e.g., a federal agency or large foundation): use funder's structures and styles.
- Targeting smaller funders (e.g., foundations or corporate funders): short, impactful concept paper
 - serves as the basis for outreach and letters of inquiry (LOIs).
- Concept papers may range from 1-5 pages.

Remember that the concept paper is a starting point for conversation with funders.

THE CONCEPT PAPER

CRAFT A COMPELLING PITCH

A concept paper should follow any technical specifications provided by the funder.

If no specifications are provided, **we recommend the following:**

- 1-inch margins, single-spaced
- 11-point Arial
- 0.25 inch left indented, fully justified paragraphs
- Bold headings where appropriate

WHAT IS A CONCEPT PAPER?

Formulate a project concept

- Purpose
- Gap to be addressed/innovation proposed
- Method of investigation
- Caveats/special conditions
- Applications or implications from successful completion

THE SIMPLE CONCEPT PAPER

To introduce your project to smaller funders, be concise.

Key suggested components:

- Introduction
- Need for the Work
- Goals /Objectives/Aims/Research questions
- Methods
- Timeline
- Expected outcomes/benefits
- Budget/requested support
- Qualifications
- Contact information

THE LESS SIMPLE CONCEPT PAPER

A concept paper takes a different kind of writing from a grant proposal.

Tips for a successful concept paper:

- Highlight key areas that are likely to **capture a funder's attention**.
- Focus on **need and impact**.
- Include **just enough detail** that the funder knows you are serious.
- **Balance selling and telling**: the ratio of selling to telling will be higher in a concept paper than in a final grant proposal.
- **Use emphasis** (bold, underline, italic) judiciously to bring the reader's attention to key elements—funders often scan concept papers and letters of inquiry quickly!

SPECIFIC AIMS PAGE AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Organize bullet points in four categories that will become four paragraphs (1 page)

1. **Introductory paragraph** – define the problem/critical need
2. **Proposed idea/solution paragraph** – provide objective(s) and rationale (who, what, why)
3. **Specific Aims listing** – brief (1 sentence) and identify “product” over “process” to meet the project’s objectives.
4. **Significance paragraph** – conclude with the novelty of the work, expectations, and anticipated impact

NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION (NSF): PROJECT SUMMARY AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Organize bullet points in three categories that will become three paragraphs (1 page)

1. **Overview** – brief statement of the problem or knowledge gap, with a description of the proposed activities, including a statement of the objectives and methods to be used.
2. **Intellectual Merit** – describe the potential of the proposed activity to advance knowledge.
3. **Broader Impacts** – describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes



LETTER OF INTENT AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Organize bullet points in five categories that will become five paragraphs (2–3 pages)

Descriptive title of your project

1. **Scientific rationale**
2. **Overall hypothesis or goal**
3. **Specific objectives** – description of the goal(s) addressed by the project, including short, medium, and long-term objectives
4. **Approach** – description of the scope of systems and justification of components under investigation
5. **Potential impact and expected outcomes** – clear descriptions and justification of the methods for the integrated and transdisciplinary approach to be used to achieve the desired goal



THE WHITE PAPER AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Keep the language in
the white paper
clean and concise.

STANDARD DOE WHITE PAPER CONTENT

1. Summary of the proposed research:
 - Problem
 - Proposed solution
 - Connection to DOE's priorities
2. Proposed collaborators, co-investigators, and consultants with the institutions
3. Brief biographical information of the principal investigator(s)
4. Order-of-magnitude estimate of the proposed work's total cost

White papers should be 1-3 pages.



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THE QUAD CHART AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Quad charts are often more effective than narrative white papers.

A QUAD CHART IS A VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF A PROJECT.

- Typically a single Powerpoint slide divided into 4 parts.
- May include impactful graphics to quickly—yet effectively—communicate project concepts.
- Also may include links to additional information online.
- Generally accompanied by your biosketch and/or information about proposed participants in the project.
- Emailed to the program contact in lieu of the narrative white paper.







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THE QUAD CHART AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

WHY: Objective, Motivation	WHAT: Hypothesis or Research Question
HOW: Technical Approach	IMPACT: Expected Outcome, Payoff



THE QUAD CHART AS A MODIFIED CONCEPT PAPER

Silver Shiny Baubles 	
<div></div> <p>DESCRIPTION: Large shiny silver balls are an expeditionary, scalable concept that provides a way for NECC to eliminate the enemy's ability to rapidly retreat from various locations of interest</p> <p>VALUE TO NAVAL WARFIGHTER:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Able to entice and mesmerize• Distracts from other more important issues• Renders all other thought processes useless	
<p>OBJECTIVES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Freeze the enemy in his tracks as he gazes at the ball for hours, unaware of his surroundings• Serve as a conversation piece that affords a gathering point for similar minded persons• Detain said persons in a non-defensive posture at a known location until such time that it is convenient for coalition forces to neutralize any perceived threats	<p>VARIANTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stainless Steel Garden Balls of various diameters• Glass Gazing Balls• Television, particularly shows like The Three Stooges or Married with Children• Quicksand <p>• STO(s) Supported: FS FPREP 1.2-1</p>
<p><i>NECC</i></p>	<p><i>Adaptive, Responsive, Expeditionary</i></p>



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**A CONCEPT PAPER IS
AN “ELEVATOR
SPEECH”—SPARK THE
FUNDER’S INTEREST!**



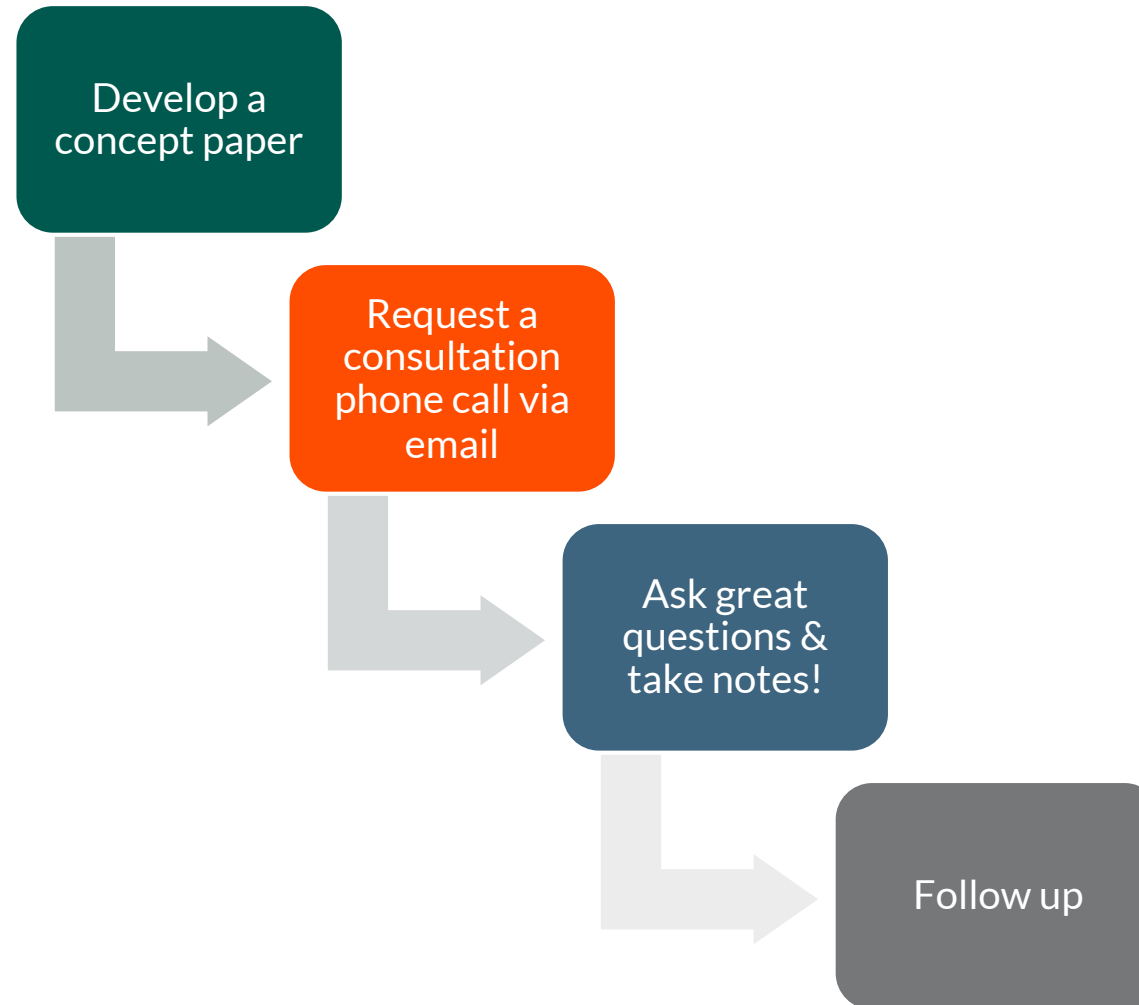
The background image is a grayscale photograph featuring a burlap money bag with a large dollar sign on the left, a bar chart with several vertical bars of varying heights in the center, and a row of coins at the bottom. A graduation cap is visible on the right side. A dark green semi-transparent banner is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the text.

CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

Build long-term relationships.

THE PITCH

CONCEPT PAPER



CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

Connecting with a funder at the concept stage allows you to:

- Introduce yourself, your work, and your concept.
- Solicit feedback on project alignment and funder interest.
- Verify funder priorities and preferences.
- Build your reputation with the funding agency or organization.
- Develop a long-term relationship to facilitate future funding.

(Note that some funders prefer not to have contact before a formal proposal or letter of inquiry—always respect funder communication preferences.)

**GREAT, BUT HOW DO I FIND THE
RIGHT CONTACT?**

This varies by agency!

CONNECTING WITH FUNDERS

FINDING FUNDER CONTACT INFORMATION

Program pages

Research Funding > Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) for Health Professional Schools and Graduate Schools (R15)

Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) for Health Professional Schools and Graduate Schools (R15)

Share:



The purpose of the Research Enhancement Award Program (REAP) for Health Professional Schools and Graduate Schools is to stimulate basic and clinical research in educational institutions that provide baccalaureate or advanced degrees for a significant number of the Nation's research scientists, but that have not been major recipients of NIH support. REAP grants create opportunities for scientists and institutions otherwise unlikely to participate extensively in NIH research programs to contribute to the Nation's biomedical and behavioral research effort. REAP grants are intended to support small-scale research projects proposed by faculty members of eligible, domestic institutions, to expose undergraduate and/or graduate students at health professional schools or graduate schools to meritorious research projects, and to strengthen the research environment of the applicant institution.

See the [Training and Careers](#) page for more information and funding opportunities.



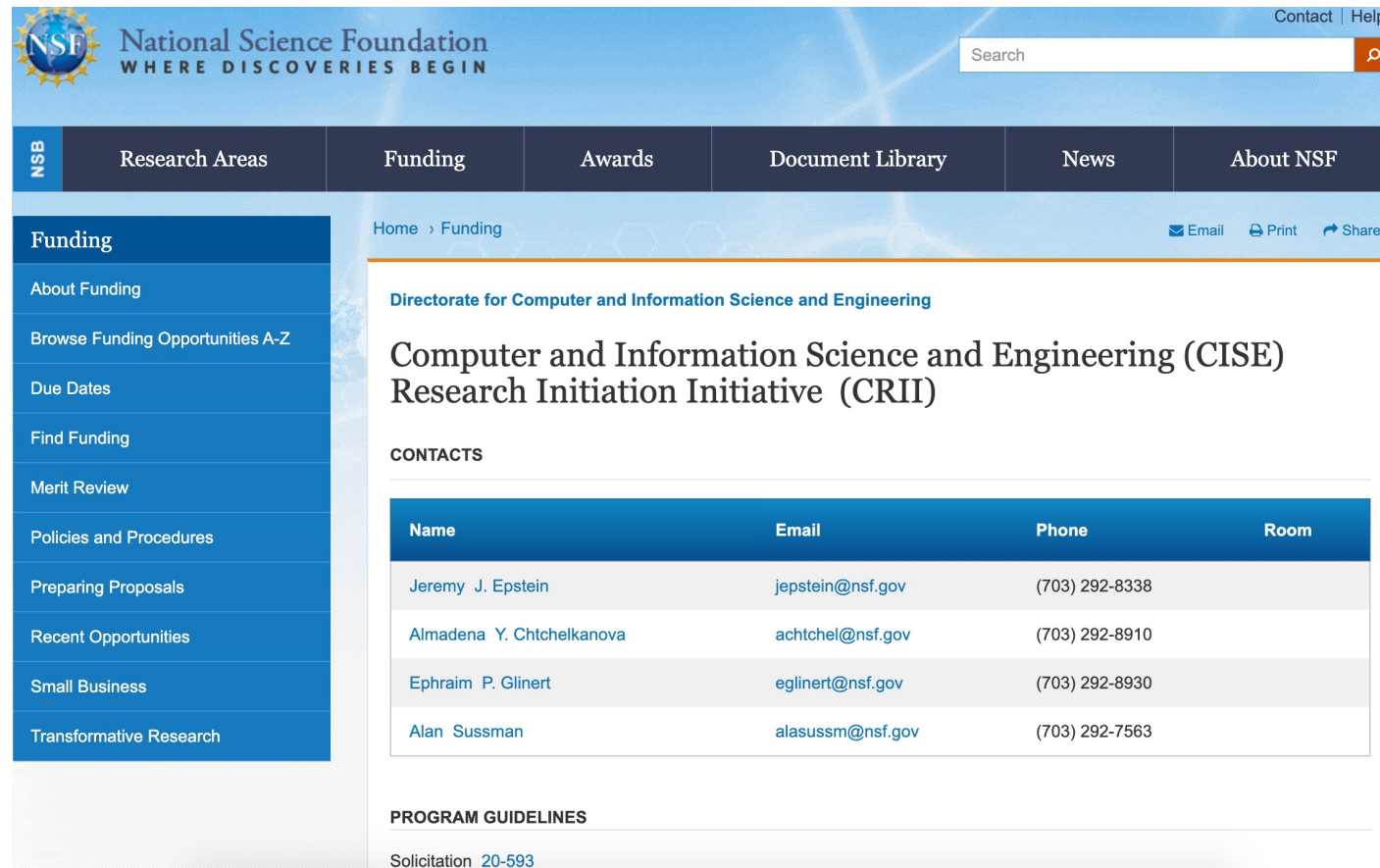
Zeynep Erim, Ph.D.
Program Director
Director – Division of Interdisciplinary
Training
301-451-4797
erimz@mail.nih.gov

<https://grants.nih.gov/funding/searchguide/index.html#/>

CONNECTING WITH FUNDERS

FINDING FUNDER CONTACT INFORMATION

Program pages



The screenshot shows the NSF website interface. At the top, the NSF logo and tagline "WHERE DISCOVERIES BEGIN" are visible. A search bar is located in the top right corner. Below the header, a navigation menu includes links for Research Areas, Funding, Awards, Document Library, News, and About NSF. The "Funding" section is expanded on the left sidebar, showing various options like "About Funding", "Browse Funding Opportunities A-Z", "Due Dates", "Find Funding", "Merit Review", "Policies and Procedures", "Preparing Proposals", "Recent Opportunities", "Small Business", and "Transformative Research". The main content area displays the "Directorate for Computer and Information Science and Engineering" and the "Computer and Information Science and Engineering (CISE) Research Initiation Initiative (CRII)". Under the "CONTACTS" heading, a table lists four contacts with their names, email addresses, and phone numbers. Below the table, the "PROGRAM GUIDELINES" section is partially visible, showing a solicitation number "20-593".

Name	Email	Phone	Room
Jeremy J. Epstein	jepstein@nsf.gov	(703) 292-8338	
Almadena Y. Chtchelkanova	achtchel@nsf.gov	(703) 292-8910	
Ephraim P. Glinert	eglinert@nsf.gov	(703) 292-8930	
Alan Sussman	alasussm@nsf.gov	(703) 292-7563	

FINDING FUNDER CONTACT INFORMATION

RFAs

Table 1: Program Area Priority Contacts

Program Area Priority	Program Area Priority Contact
Professional Development for Agricultural Literacy (PDAL) Grants	Dr. Carlos Ortiz, (202) 445-5594 or carlos.ortiz@usda.gov
Agricultural Workforce Training (AWT) Grants	Dr. Carlos Ortiz, (202) 445-5594 or carlos.ortiz@usda.gov
Food and Agricultural Non-formal Education (FANE)	Dr. Maurice Smith, Jr., maurice.smith2@usda.gov ; Dr. Suzanne Stluka, (816) 908-3305 or suzanne.stluka@usda.gov ; Dr. Carlos Ortiz, (202) 445-5594 or carlos.ortiz@usda.gov
Research and Extension Experiences for Undergraduates (REEU)	Dr. Ray Ali, (816) 926-1453 or nifa-education@usda.gov
Predoctoral Fellowships	Dr. Ray Ali, (816) 926-1453 or nifafellows@usda.gov
Postdoctoral Fellowships	Dr. Ray Ali, (816) 926-1453 or nifafellows@usda.gov
Agricultural Literacy and Workforce Development Evaluation	Dr. Carlos Ortiz, (202) 445-5594 or carlos.ortiz@usda.gov

CONNECTING WITH MISSION- DRIVEN AGENCIES

DOE and DOD

WHAT IS “MISSION-DRIVEN?”

DOE and DOD are
mission-driven
funders.

Example: DOD

A MISSION-DRIVEN AGENCY FUNDS RESEARCH IN
SERVICE OF SPECIFIC APPLIED OBJECTIVES.

- The mission of the Department of Defense is to **provide the military forces with what is needed to deter war and to protect the security of our country.**
- DoD funds a **wide variety of research projects**
- Funding priorities change rapidly as agency needs change.



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DOE AND DOD: STAFF-DRIVEN GRANTMAKING

Networking is an essential part of the DOE and DOD grantmaking process

- Identify personnel working in your area of interest.
- Network with colleagues funded by DOE or DOD.

<https://www.energy.gov/offices>



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DOE AND DOD: STAFF-DRIVEN GRANTMAKING

Networking is an essential part of the DOE and DOD grantmaking process

- Identify personnel working in your area of interest.
- Network with colleagues funded by DOE or DOD.
- Attend DOE/DOD-sponsored conferences.
- Reach out directly to relevant staff members.

<https://www.energy.gov/offices>



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Be aware of Differing Processes!



Upon the issuance of a FOA, EERE personnel are prohibited from communicating (in writing or otherwise) with applicants regarding the FOA except through the established question and answer process as described below.

Feedback on individual concepts will not be provided through Q&A.

—DOE, EERE (E-FOA-0002498)

DOD: KEY GRANTMAKING AGENCIES

Identify personnel
working in your area
of interest

<https://www.darpa.mil/>

- Air Force Office of Scientific Research (AFOSR)
- Army Research Laboratory / Army Research Office (ARL/ARO)
- Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs (CDMRP)
- Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA)
- Office of Naval Research (ONR)



FOUNDATIONS: DIFFERING PROCESSES

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

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[To Apply](#)[Application Details](#)[FAQs](#)

Our Process:

1.

Most applications can begin with a Letter of Inquiry (LOI) that details the work and organization making the request. If using Fluxx, you will receive a request ID number via email.

2.

Once reviewed, a program officer will work with your organization to refine the request to move it forward to the full proposal process, or communicate back that the LOI is not advancing and why.

suspicious, please report it at: digitalscams@kresge.org. More information can be found [here](#).

[MORE FOR CURRENT GRANTEES](#)

Application Resources

Here are a few documents that will help you as you complete an application.

- [Sample Budget Form](#)
- [Installing and using Google Chrome](#)
- [Guide to Fluxx](#)
- [Sample Grant Agreement](#)
- [Non-Discrimination Statement and Screening Policy](#)

**REMEMBER: FOR MANY
OPPORTUNITIES, IT IS
NOT WORTH SUBMITTING
A PROPOSAL IF YOU
HAVE NOT FIRST
CONNECTED WITH A
PROGRAM OFFICER.**



CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

Email content tips:

- The program you are applying to
- The title of your proposal
- 1–3 sentences summarizing your request
- 4–6 sentences summarizing your proposed project
- 2–3 sentences with your background and info about your research program
- 1–2 concluding sentences thanking the PO, offering to send your concept paper, and providing your availability for a call
- Provide your full contact information

Keep your communication with the PO professional and respectful: remember, you are building your reputation.

PUBLIC FUNDER OUTREACH

SAMPLE EMAIL TO A PROGRAM OFFICER

Subject: Request for call to discuss XXX due on DATE

Dear Dr. X:

I am interested in submitting a proposal for program solicitation #XXX “Program Solicitation Title” and would like to schedule a call with you to discuss whether my research is appropriate for this opportunity. [If your request is urgent, indicate that here and explain why.]

[Briefly describe your proposed work and why you think it is a good fit.] If it would be helpful, I can provide a [brief concept paper / project summary] for you to review prior to our call. [If you have specific questions that you want the PO to consider, include them.]

[Provide possible days/times or indicate that you can be available at the PO’s convenience.]

Thank you in advance for your assistance. I look forward to talking with you soon.

Contact Information

PUBLIC FUNDER OUTREACH

CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

- You'll usually get a response within a week. Study it for tone as well as content.
 - Was the response enthusiastic?
 - Did the PO "get it"?
 - Are there questions you need to answer during the call?
 - Are there questions you need to ask during the call?

CONCEPT/WHITE PAPER DISCUSSION

Always prepare questions before your meeting with the Program Officer.

Common questions:

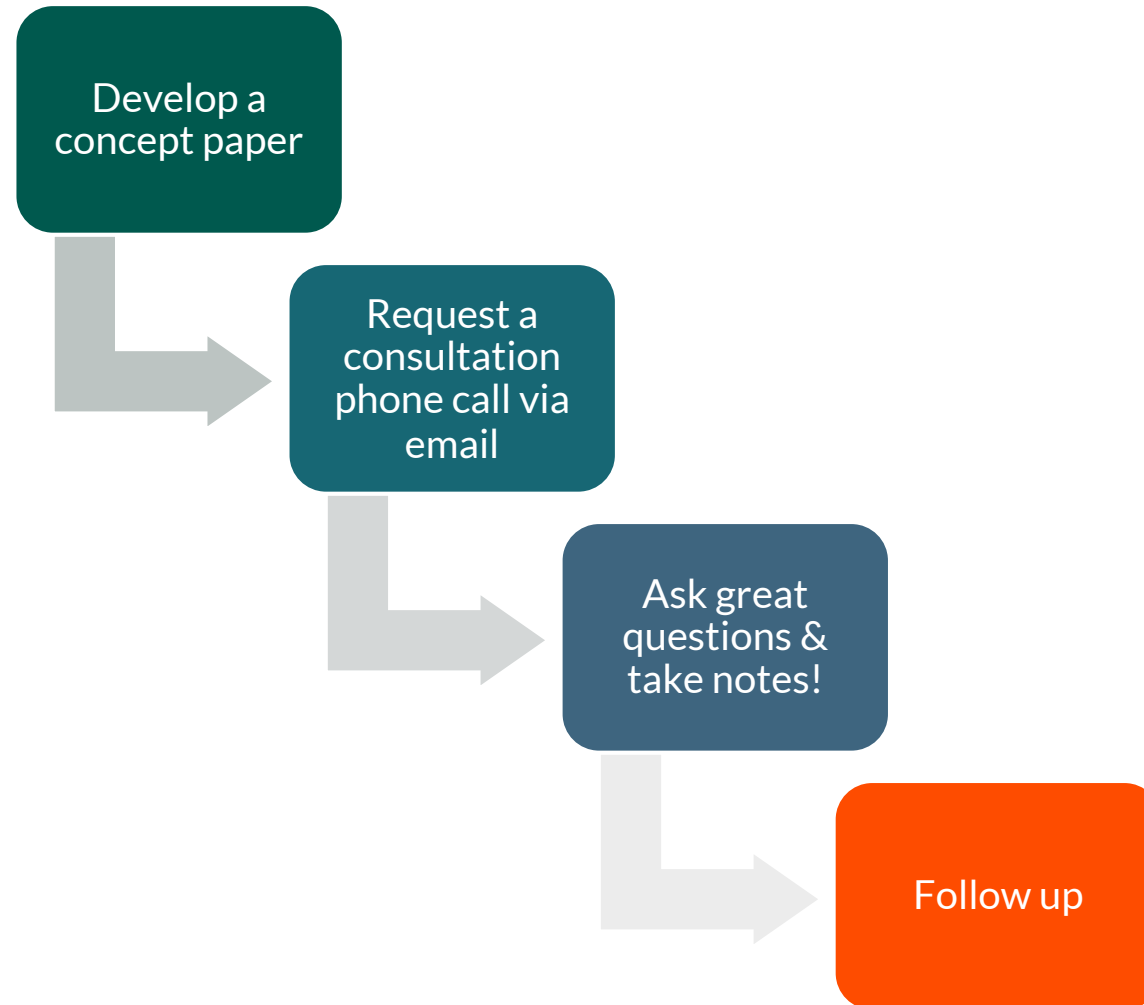
- Is this project a good fit for this opportunity / your funding priorities?
- Are there other opportunities that would be a better fit?
- What are your recommendations for improving the fit / competitiveness?
- What other recommendations do you have?
- What are the most common causes for proposals being declined?
- What are the usual success rates for this program?
- What is your preferred method for me to contact you if I have additional questions?

**REMEMBER TO SPEND AS
MUCH TIME LISTENING AS
TALKING: PROGRAM
OFFICERS CAN PROVIDE
VERY VALUABLE
FEEDBACK AND GUIDANCE.**



THE PITCH

CONCEPT PAPER



PUBLIC FUNDER FOLLOWUP

CONNECT WITH FUNDERS

Always follow up !

- Follow up with an email thanking the PO for their time and summarizing the key points you took away from the call.
- In any future communication about this opportunity, reference your call.
- Use the subject line of your email to reflect the purpose and urgency of the request.
- Remember that Program Officers are very busy: **make things easy for them with clear, specific, actionable communication and a courteous tone.**

**REMEMBER: GRANT
FUNDING IS A HUMAN
ENDEAVOR; TO MAKE IT
WORK FOR YOU, BUILD
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS
WITH THE PEOPLE
INVOLVED.**



CONNECTING WITH FUNDERS

- UTIA Office of Sponsored Programs
 - <https://utiasponsoredprograms.tennessee.edu/>
- Contacting Staff at the NIH Institutes and Centers
 - <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/how-to-apply-application-guide/resources/contacting-nih-staff.htm>
- The Anatomy of a Specific Aims Page
 - <https://www.biosciencewriters.com/NIH-Grant-Applications-The-Anatomy-of-a-Specific-Aims-Page.aspx>
- NSF 101: 5 tips for working with an NSF Program Officer
 - <https://beta.nsf.gov/science-matters/nsf-101-5-tips-how-work-nsf-program-officer>

Hanover Research supports UTIA faculty throughout the grant development process.

How Hanover works with the UTIA:

Content Director, Chris Gray is UTIA's primary point of contact at Hanover and manages support for individual faculty projects.

Hanover is available to provide UTIA faculty with proposal revision support on new proposals and resubmissions.

Please contact Dr. Tim Rials or Jessica McCord to learn more about UTIA's relationship with Hanover and the process for requesting support.

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WEEKLY RESEARCH ALERTS

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MONTHLY PROJECTIONS

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Put your institution's faculty on the path towards submitting a grant proposal while equipping them with valuable knowledge about the grantseeking process.

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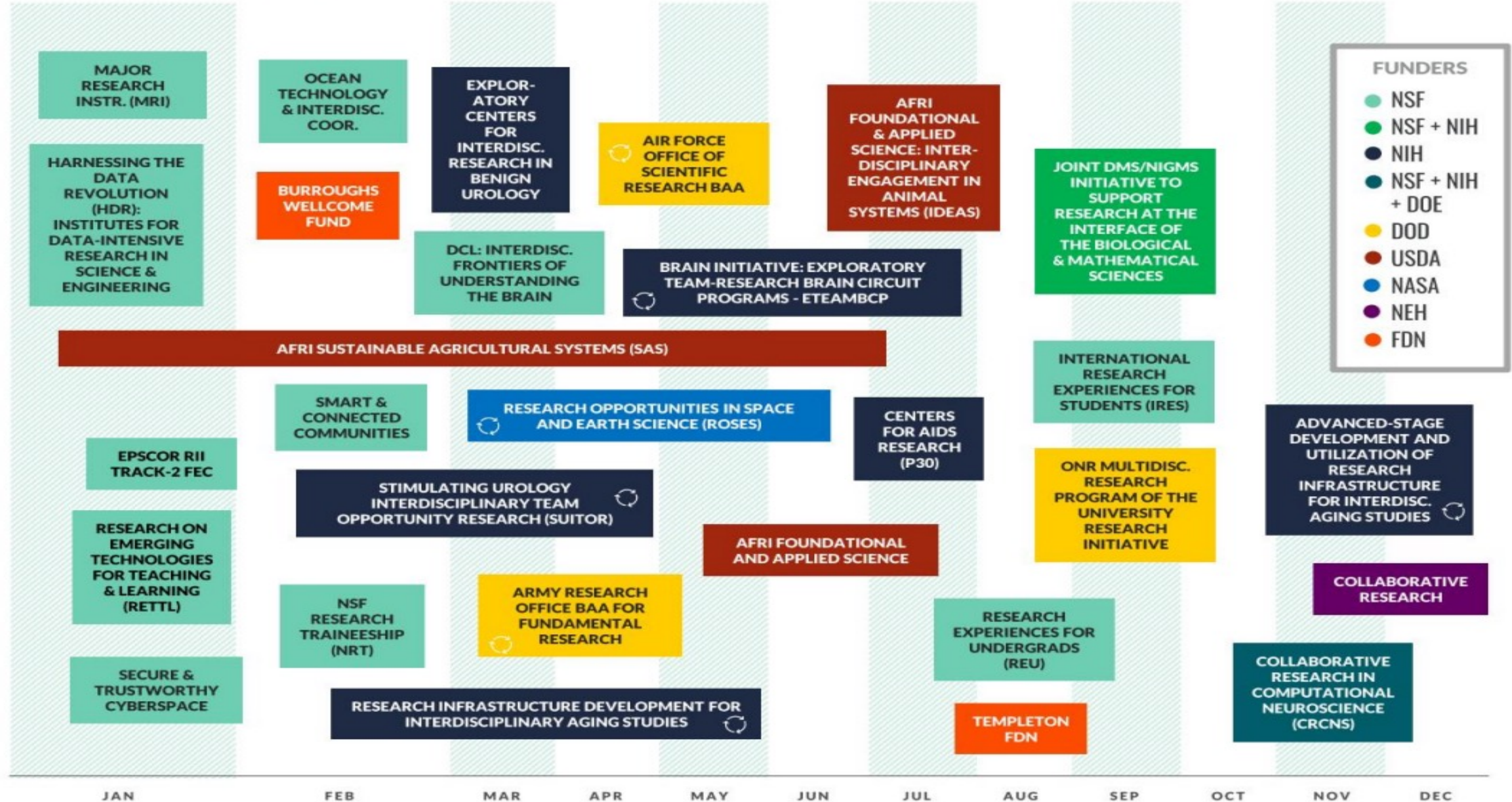
YOUR TEAM

RECENTLY VIEWED

Training Preparation Toolkit
Selecting a Faculty Cohort - Hanover's G...
Pre-Post Grant Academy Survey
Grant Academy Model

[ORIENTATION VIDEO](#)

[HR Digital Access Request](#)
[| Hanover Research](#)





QUESTIONS?



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