TURNING GOOD IDEAS INTO FUNDABLE PROPOSALS

University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture

May 6, 2024
WEBINAR LOGISTICS

RUNTIME

~45 minutes plus 15 at the end for Q&A

Q&A

Questions may be asked throughout the presentation via the chat link at the bottom of your screen. Some may be answered in the moment, while others may be saved until the end.

RECORDING & SLIDES

All attendees will receive a copy of the recording, including the slides.
Paul Tuttle, MA
GRANTS CONSULTANT

**TODAY’S PRESENTER**

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**TOTAL WINS**

$175+ MILLION

Total grant funding for clients since 2003 from nearly every Federal funder and many major foundations.

**MAJOR AWARDS**

- MA in English with a concentration in Rhetoric and Composition
- Former business and technical writing instructor
- Worked at Hanover 2011-2015 (and now 2022-present)

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**On a personal note . . .**

- Born and raised in North Carolina
- Interested in classic and modern cars
- Hiking, biking, swimming, and reading

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PRESENTER

Paul Tuttle, MA
GRANTS CONSULTANT
TODAY’S AGENDA

GOOD IDEAS VS. FUNDABLE IDEAS

• Recognizing and Generating *Good* Ideas
• Transforming *Good* Into *Fundable* Ideas
  o Understanding the Context
  o Developing a Logic Model
  o Creating a Concept Paper
  o Consulting a Program Officer
• Key Takeaways
• Resources
• Q&A / Discussion
### Key Differences Between Good and Fundable Ideas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A good idea . . .</th>
<th>A fundable idea . . .</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... helps someone</td>
<td>... addresses the funder’s target audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... advances an important agenda</td>
<td>... advances the funder’s agenda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... creates interest</td>
<td>... aligns with funder priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... is intellectually sound</td>
<td>... is exciting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... addresses something that is poorly understood</td>
<td>... addresses something <em>important</em> that is poorly understood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... can have undefined steps or processes</td>
<td>... takes a clear path from A to B to C (with limited exceptions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... can be of any scale</td>
<td>... is scaled by prior experience, a budget, and/or a period of performance</td>
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Adapted from *Helping Faculty Differentiate Between the Good and the Fundable*, by Michael Preuss and Susan Perri
RECOGNIZING AND Generating GOOD IDEAS
WHERE DO GOOD IDEAS COME FROM?

- Note the many **problems, concerns, issues, and challenges** surrounding us:
  - Scientific/research problems
  - Capacity/infrastructure inadequacies
  - Information/visibility/assessment concerns
  - Discipline-specific teaching/pedagogical issues
  - Population-specific challenges/differentials in equity or progress
  - Workforce disparities or needs
  - Knowledge gaps

- To address one of them, consider a project design that provides **realistic solutions, answers, and/or new knowledge** based on:
  - Your expertise/experience
  - Known content/disciplinary/methodological interest(s)
  - Testing an existing/proven approach in a new context
  - Leveraging partner expertise/experience
Scholarly work is contextual and collaborative.

Ask yourself and others whether your good idea might be fundable, if transformed into a project.

**IS MY IDEA BAD, GOOD, OR FUNDABLE?**

- Indicative preliminary data?
- Novelty or innovation?
- Low cost?
- Institutional/external financial support?
- Existing partnerships/expertise?
- Sustainability?
- Meaningful outcomes/significant impact?

Remember that your project outcomes or impacts serve as funders’ return on their investments (ROI).
TRANSFORMING GOOD INTO FUNDABLE IDEAS
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: PROSPECTING

• Find pertinent funders via **prospecting** using the following:
  o Grants.gov, Candid, Pivot, or other databases
  o Funder websites: NEA/NEH, IMLS, ACLS, NSF SBE directorate, etc.
  o Colleagues, peers, and mentors
  o Hanover prospecting reports

• Adjust the **project concept** to suit the opportunity
  o Focus on what is important to the funder
  o Find ways to help the funder accomplish its mission or vision
  o A caveat: Avoid twisting your project concept into an unrecognizable mess merely to obtain funding
UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT: ALIGNMENT

• Review any relevant scholarly work, as appropriate
  o Look for overall trends in problems, solutions, or funding

• Review the funder’s website
  o Learn its history, mission, and/or vision
  o Understand its recent funding and future directions

• Analyze the funding opportunity (RFP, FOA, or solicitation)
  o Recognize its purpose(s)
  o Note caveats, preferences, and emphases
  o Look carefully for what will not be funded

• Review abstracts/proposals from prior awardees
  o NEH: examples of funded proposals
  o Other funders: awards databases or USAspending.gov
DEVELOPING A LOGIC MODEL

- Flowchart showing a **theory of change**
- **Planning** and **communication** tool
- **How and why** the project will yield **outcomes** or **impact**

Logic models help you plan by:

- Forcing you to concisely describe your approach
- Summarizing linkages more simply than via prose
- Emphasizing the research bases for the project
- Narrowing the focus to **meaningful outcomes**

RESOURCES

- **Logic Model Development Guide** (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

- Theory of Change materials (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
  https://www.aecf.org/resources/theory-of-change

Logic models represent the ways your project ideas fit together and move forward over time to advance knowledge.
A logic model’s constituent elements relate to each other in ways that synergistically optimize the positive effects of the project over time.

**ELEMENTS OF A LOGIC MODEL**

**Inputs** = resources invested in the project
- Personnel, partners, funding, facilities, time and effort, community engagement, etc.

**Activities** = actions the project will perform
- Recruiting, training, marketing, evaluation, travel, workforce development, student support, etc.

**Outputs** = expected immediate results
- Focus on project *implementation*

**Outcomes** = expected impacts
- Focus on project *effectiveness*
EXAMPLE: BICYCLE HELMET AWARENESS

**Situation**
- Funding for an informational campaign to encourage bicyclists to use helmets has been received

**Inputs**
- Three full-time staff members
- Volunteers with traumatic brain injuries
- Space and equipment (donated by a local nonprofit agency)

**Target Systems**
- Individuals and organizations aligned with riding bicycles for recreation and/or transportation
- Journalists and publications covering disability, athletic, and mainstream issues
- Bicycle helmet and bicycle manufacturers conducting marketing/public relations campaigns
- Community-based charities interested in bicycle helmet give-away programs
- Community and state chapters, and the national association on brain injury

**Activities**
- Gather current information on deaths due to bicycling accidents
- Gather information about rate of traumatic brain injuries from bicycle accidents currently documented
- Gather data about injury prevention from use of helmets when bicycling
- Develop press kits for media
- Develop and support use of Public Service Announcements for television and radio
- Attract key individual journalists to the issue of traumatic brain injuries from bicycle accidents
- Promote attention and award recognition to media attention on helmet use campaign

**Outputs**
- Special Report Comparing Costs of Helmet Safety and Traumatic Brain Injury produced and shared with all local, state, and national TBI-related agencies
- Fact sheets produced on available data concerning incidence rates of traumatic brain injury and helmet safety programs distributed by local state, and federal elected officials
- Establish national recognition program for effective helmet safety programs and select volunteer “celebrity” to work in association with this recognition effort
- PSA announcements about people benefited by helmet safety programs and people (including family members) experiencing injuries that they consider preventable through the wearing of a helmet while bicycling
- Contact Governor’s Committees for People with Disabilities concerning past “journalist awards” and also coverage (related through press kits) of helmet safety effects on TBI (including consumer stories)

**Outcomes - Impact**

**Short-Term**
- Bicycle riders will become more aware of benefits of wearing helmet while bicycling
- Disability and mainstream journalists will be more aware of bicycle helmet use

**Intermediate**
- Bicycle riders will use helmets more frequently

**Long-Term**
- Frequency of deaths due to bicycling accidents will decrease
- Rate of traumatic brain injuries from bicycling accidents will decline

**Data**
- Focus groups measuring change in awareness
- Individual interviews with volunteer group of bicyclists
- Focus groups with disability and mainstream journalists
- Individual interviews with journalists to assess specific changes in awareness and understanding

**Data**
- Focus groups to assess helmet use and attitude regarding helmet use
- Survey of TBI-related consumer organization to identify new information sharing campaigns implemented as a result of project activities and information sharing

**Data**
- National data sources
CREATING A CONCEPT PAPER

Many funders specify Concept Paper (or Letter of Inquiry) requirements, but if they do not, here is a sample concept paper outline:

• Executive Summary/Introduction
  o Org/PI, project title, objectives, anticipated outcomes, amount, term, overarching alignment

• Problem/Need/Rationale/Background & Significance

• Project Plan/Statement of Work

• Expected Impacts/Outcomes
  o Alignment with funder mission/vision/purpose of opportunity

• Management Plan
  o Personnel, resources, and timeline
  o Experience with similar successful projects

• Budget/Amount Requested

• Conclusion/Contact Information

A concept paper (1-2 pages long; also called an “abstract” or “elevator pitch”) is your first attempt at describing your project vision in sentences and paragraphs.
CONSULTING A PROGRAM OFFICER

• Develop a 1- to 2-page concept paper (more detail = better)
• Make contact early to show preparedness/seriousness
• Request a phone or virtual consultation
• Ask great questions and take copious notes

RESOURCES

“Can We Talk? Contacting Grant Program Officers,” by Bob Porter
https://www.nordp.org/assets/resources-docs/porter-canwetalk.pdf

“What to Say—and Not Say—to Program Officers,” by Michael Spires
KEY TAKEAWAYS
• Generating merely good ideas isn’t enough. They need to be framed appropriately to be fundable.

• How to frame them appropriately:
  o Conceptualize them as a project with defined start and end dates; goals, objectives, and activities; a management plan; expected results, anticipated outcomes, and/or measurable impacts; a plan for sharing those results/outcomes/impacts with interested stakeholders; and a budget, budget justification, and timeline
  o Understand the context by reviewing disciplinary and funding trends, prospecting for funders and opportunities, learning the grantseeking culture and business practices of those specific funders, and aligning your project idea with the funder’s mission/vision and the funding opportunity’s purpose
  o Develop a logic model, create a concept paper, and consult a program officer
LEVERAGE YOUR RESOURCES
RESOURCES AT YOUR INSTITUTION

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225 Morgan Hall
Knoxville, TN 37996-4514
Phone: 865-974-7357
Fax: 865-974-7451
Email: aggrant@utk.edu or extensiongrants@utk.edu
Developing organizational capacity to pursue and win grant funding, through training, strategic assessment, and benchmarking.

Identifying and evaluating grant opportunities aligned to member projects, while enabling longer-term planning through funded project research and forecasting.

Assessing and developing competitive project concepts, helping members to navigate funder requirements and build relationships prior to completing submissions.

Supporting member-led grant proposal projects by providing review and revision services designed to ensure the strongest possible proposals are submitted.

Leading programmatic grant proposals, in close coordination with member teams, crafting narrative drafts over a defined timeline towards a polished submission.
Hanover’s Grants Learning Center (GLC) has a new nine-module series designed to help you hone key grantseeking skills. The GLC also houses trainings on NSF CAREER and NIH R-Grants. Register today with the referral code Smokey.
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Q&A / DISCUSSION
Kristen Beales, PhD
Content Director, Grants
4401 Wilson Blvd, Arlington, VA 22203
www.hanoverresearch.com
E: kbeales@hanoverresearch.com
P: 703-346-4762