

Rules for Writing a Winning Grant Proposal

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Rule 1. Have a Good Idea



A Good Idea Is:

- **Significant**--it solves a problem, answers a perplexing question, expands the knowledge base
- **Innovative**—new approach, new method, puts ideas together in a novel way.
- **Better**-- than other approaches in this research area
- **Understandable**—know your audience, make sure the reviewers will understand. Could your parents understand?
- **Has a Payoff**--makes a contribution, provides benefit, know your outcomes
- **Withstands Vetting**--be sure to run it by colleagues

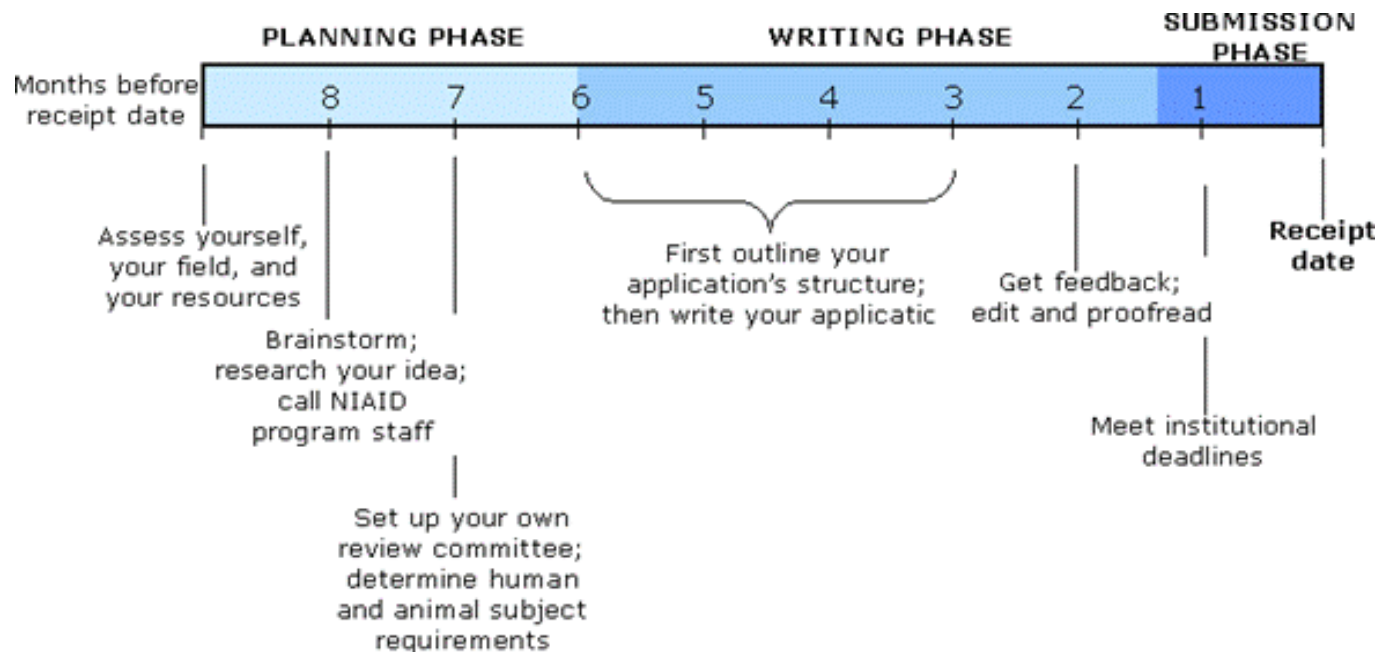
What Comes First a Good Idea or a Funding Opportunity?

It doesn't matter as long as:

- The idea is good
- The idea is within the opportunity's scope and the funder's interest

Rule 2. Start Early

- It will take longer than you ever expect!
- Suggested time line:



Rule 3. Organize Before You Write

- **What problem do you want to address?**
- **Why is this problem significant/important?**
Proof?
- **Why is your idea better?**
- **How is it new, unique, different?**
- **What are your expected outcomes?**
- **What are your proposal themes?**

Rule 3. Organize Before You Write

- **What is your overall research goal?**
- **What is it for this project/proposal?**
- **What are your objectives/aims?**
- **Approach**
 - **Should follow directly from objectives/aims**
 - **Think about both the forest and the trees**
 - **Preliminary studies—do you have enough?**
 - **What are potential problems? How will you mitigate them?**

Rule 4. Write Your Problem Statement/ Specific Aims First

- **Concise statement of**
 - Overall goal
 - Specific objectives
 - Significance
 - Payoff
- **Can be used to help refine and vet problem and approach**

Rule 5. Start Your Budget Next

- Takes **3 times** longer than you ever expect!!!
- Gives you time to get equipment and other costs.
- Gives you time to work out \$\$\$ split with co-PIs and other institutions.
- Allows you to be realistic about what you can do.
- Your PreAwards Specialist will love you!



Rule 6. Give the Reviewers What they Want

- **Reviewers=Program Manager + Review Panel**
- **Things to do:**
 - **Make sure project is within solicitation's scope.**
 - **Follow Funding Agency's preparation guidelines.**
 - **Write to the review criteria.**
 - **Be kind to your reviewers**
 - **Proposal organization should be consistent throughout.**
 - **Clearly tell a good, engaging story with minimal "word fog" and jargon.**
 - **Assume a reader who is uninformed but infinitely bright.**

Rule 7. Have a Pre-submission Review Plan

- Ask a mentor and/or seasoned colleagues for comments/critiques
 - Check your ego AT THE DOOR – this is business
 - The colleague should be qualified
 - Last minute requests are NEVER appreciated
- Consider a proofreader
 - Not associated with the project
 - Detail oriented
 - Format, style, errors and inconsistencies – not content
 - Careless errors are fatal



Rule 8. Make Your Abstract Shine

- The ABSTRACT is the portal to the entire proposal.
- Program managers will only read the **abstract** and the **reference list** before assigning reviewers.
- The Abstract will be showcased on the agency's web site.
- The Abstract is the only part some agency people (i.e., financial) will ever read.
- The Abstract and the Problem Statement are often where reviewers make up their minds.

Rule 9. Avoid “Porter’s Pitfalls”

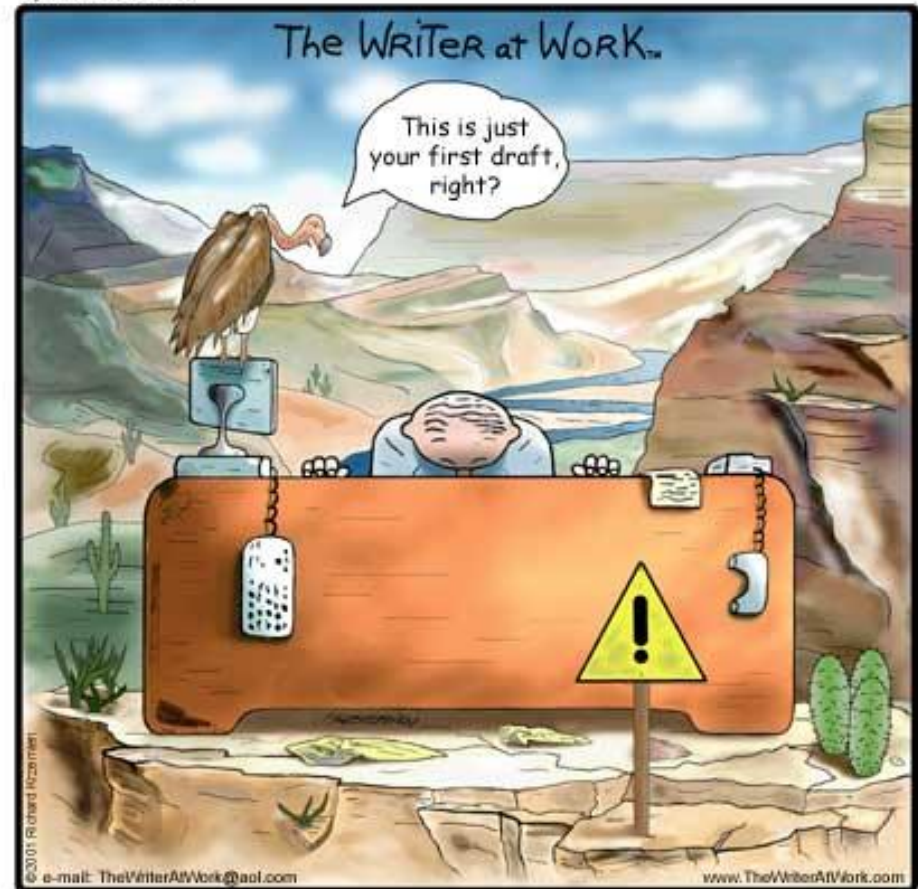
Success = Good Ideas - Pitfalls



The Pitfalls are:

1. Poor fit
2. Poor organization
3. Weak argument
4. Gyrating jargon
5. Obtuse goals and objectives
6. An unclear work plan
7. Deviating from the guidelines
8. Ignoring the review criteria
9. Weak abstract
10. Ignoring your colleague's comments
11. Errors like typos and misspellings
12. Poor editing

By Richard Krzemien



CAUTION:
Alternate reality under construction.

Rule 10. Be Strategic about Biosketches

- **Tailor your bio to the scope**
 - Personal Statement/Synergistic Activities
 - Papers Included
 - Whose included on the team
- **Remember**
 - “Investigator(s)” is an NIH review criterion
 - NSF/others ask-“How well qualified is the individual/team?”

Rule 11. Don't Forget "Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources"

- **Demonstrate that you have everything to complete the job**
 - **Not** a bulleted/laundry list or a vague description of lab size or number of computers in your lab or on campus
 - Include only relevant equipment/facilities
 - Indicate how equipment/facilities will be used— relate directly to your project
 - “Other Resources” equals unfunded collaborators and expansion of “broader impacts” and approach
- **Remember**
 - “Environment” is an NIH review criterion
 - NSF/others ask-“Are there adequate resources available?”

**Rule 12. Contact Your Proposal
Development/PreAwards Office
Early**

The Rules

1. **Have a Good Idea**
2. **Start Early**
3. **Organize Before You Write**
4. **Write Your Problem Statement/Specific Aims First**
5. **Start Your Budget Next**
6. **Give the Reviewers What they Want**
7. **Have a Pre-submission Review Plan**
8. **Make your Abstract Shine**
9. **Avoid *'Porter's Pitfalls'***
10. **Be Strategic About Biosketches**
11. **Don't Forget "Facilities, Equipment and other Resources"**
12. **Contact your Proposal Development/PreAwards Office Early**

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