Grant Opportunities and Grant Writing for Digital Library Projects

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Or…

While you’re up, get me a grant

Types of Funding Agencies

- **Corporate: driven by bottom line — how how can it help business?**
- **Private Foundation: philanthropic organization**
- **Government: federal or state funds made available through competition**

Major grantors to IU Libraries

- Institute of Museum and Library Services
- National Science Foundation
- National Endowment for the Humanities
- U.S. Department of Education
- National Archives and Records Administration
- Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

Grant Applications at IU

You are the project investigator, not the applicant.

Your project must reflect institutional priorities and meet institutional approval.

The cost of credibility.

Matching Your Idea to the Marketplace

- Identify your marketplace
- What are the trends?
- What is being funded?
  - Similar programs?
- Who is being funded?
  - Who are your competitors?

Think like a sponsor

- Does this fit the priorities?
- Does this meet our requirements?
- Will this have sufficient impact?
- Is it realistic?
- Will it continue after the funds are spent?
- Does this project really need to be done?
- Is the staff competent?
- Is the organization credible?

" Actually, we haven't quite decided whether your proposal will fly."
From the Wall Street Journal—Permission Cartoon Features Syndicate

Crafting the Proposal

Creative people often believe that just because they have good ideas, someone will give them some money.

Is Your Project Achievable?

- Fundability
- Feasibility
- Do-ability

Your project is significant because:

- Solves a problem
- Creates new and important knowledge
- Creates a model
- Improves the human condition
- Improves scientific technique

No one is waiting for your proposal.

No one cares about your project or the people you want to serve.

"What you need is a grant to give you some free time to write a really first-rate grant proposal."

What is a proposal?

- It is evidence, a proof of your professionalism.
- Your understanding of the problem or need
- Your expertise as a problem solver
- Your ability to develop and execute a plan
- Your ability to manage the plan
- Your institution's ability to oversee the project
- Your creativity

The Nitty Gritty [1/2]

- Obtain guidelines
- Contact program officer at funding agency
- Select primary authors of proposal
- Prepare abstract and submit letter of intent
- Contact units for support or collaboration
- Obtain initial administrative approval
- Complete review of literature
- Prepare first draft

The Nitty Gritty [2/2]

- Prepare budget
- Revise proposal based on feedback
- Collect vitae
- Obtain letters of endorsement
- Complete institutional forms
- Obtain administrative signatures
- Duplicate proposal
- Submit proposal

From *Proposals that Work,* by Locke, Spirduso, and Silverman

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Remember the Reviewer

Funding sources don’t give money to research projects.

People give money to people.

Why Proposals Fail [1/2]

- Deadline not met
- Guidelines not followed *exactly*
- Nothing unusual, intriguing, or clever
- Proposal did not meet this year's priorities
- Proposal was not absolutely clear
- Proposal was not absolutely complete
- Poor literature review
- Proposal appeared beyond the capacity of the researcher

Why proposals fail [2/2]

- Unsuitable method of study
- Unrealistic budget
- Cost was greater than anticipated benefit
- Poor writing
- Not sustainable

What makes a successful proposal?

- A proposal is a planning document
- Well-conceived, well-planned project
- Involvement of project manager
- Right match with priorities of funding agency

Brancolini's Top Twelve Tips:

Writing a Successful Digital Library Grant Proposal

What is a digital library project?

- Digital conversion for the purpose of online access to an information resource
- Creation of metadata for future digital conversion
- Tools for creating or using online resources (software development)
- Research or education related to the creation, storage, delivery, and preservation of digital content and its attendant metadata

Tip #1

- **Contact someone from the Digital Library Program early in the planning process**
  - **Large-scale research projects funded by**
    - **National Science Foundation**
    - **Institute for Museum and Library Services**
    - **U.S. Department of Education**
    - **National Endowment for the Humanities**
    - **Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**
  - **Grants to the Digital Library Program and academic departments with DLP as a partner: ~ $8.8 million since 1998)**
  - **New web site (currently being designed) will have grant information, including links to potential sources of funding and deadlines**

Tip #2

- **Choose your grant program carefully**
  - **Some are more likely to fund your project than others**
  - **Research the percentage of projects funded**
  - **May want to match your project with a funding source that has funded a similar project in the past**
  - **Various programs have different cost-share requirements, which could have an impact on where you apply**

Tip #3

- **Develop project ideas and begin drafting a proposal before you begin looking for possible grants.**
  - **When a funding opportunity arises, you will be ready to customize your proposal to address the specific evaluative criteria of the grant program.**
  - **Look for strategic timing – eg., our Hoagy Carmichael Project was funded for his centennial year.**

Tip #4

- **Build upon your own projects or related projects completed by others.**
  - **Finish digitizing a large collection your have begun or digitize a complementary collection.**
  - **Develop a software development project that extends a previous project; eg., Variations3 builds directly upon needs identified during Variations2.**
  - **Research related projects completed by other institutions; they may be potential partners. Advantage of professional associations and meetings.**

Tip #5

- **Evaluate critically how well your project meets the goals and objectives of the grant program; don't force conformity.**
  - **A great project proposal will be unsuccessful if you select the wrong grant program.**
  - **It is costly and time-consuming to submit grant proposals; don't waste your time if it's not the correct program.**

Tip #6

- In the project development phase, evaluate your ideas critically.
  - If you are not convinced that your project is important, it will be difficult to convince evaluators.
  - Feel free to abandon your project idea – temporarily or permanently – if you discover that you really don't want to do the project or the timing isn't right for some reason.

Tip #7

- If your project does not build on a previous project, consider conducting a needs assessment.
  - A good resource is the Institute for Museum and Library Services' online tutorial, *NLG Project Planning*: http://www.imls.gov/project%5Fplanning/
  - This will demonstrate that you are carefully considering project options.
  - Needs assessment should focus on users, not the institution; this sounds obvious, but you would be surprised.

Tip #8

- **Your project will be evaluated based upon its significance and your ability to complete it successfully.**
  - **Your proposal will be devoted to explaining why your project is important, how you will complete it successfully, and why your project team has just the right combination of skill, knowledge, and experience to do it.**
  - **Use examples, cite your previous work.**
  - **In the personnel section, cite relevant experience; if this section looks weak to you, re-evaluate…**

Tip #9

- **Choose appropriate project partners.**
  - **Appropriate partners bring complementary skills and/or knowledge to your project team.**
  - **They may have worked on similar collections or technical projects.**
  - **They may have applied for a similar grant, unsuccessfully; eg., SLIS digital library education project.**
  - **More is not better…but appropriate partners strengthen proposals.**
  - **Most proposals require a partnership agreement to clarify the roles of each partner; important to work out during the planning phase.**

Tip #10

- **Follow the funding agency's guidelines carefully.**
  - **Note the evaluative criteria and be sure that you address each of them.**
  - **If you cannot address each of them, review your decision to submit a proposal.**
  - **There are general requirements that all programs will want, but many programs have specific criteria:**
    - **IMLS National Leadership Grants**
      - **National impact**
      - **Adaptability**
      - **Dissemination – resource and project findings**
      - **Evaluation – preferably outcome-based – but also evaluation of web interface and functionality**

Tip #11

- **Pay attention to the details.**
  - **Make sure that the budget narrative matches the actual budget.**
  - **Make sure that you explain clearly how budget figures were determined.**
  - **Make sure that the work plan makes sense and includes all project activities.**
  - **Make sure that the timeline is reasonable and based upon experience, either your own or that of your project partner(s).**

Tip #12

- For expensive and/or groundbreaking projects, obtain external letters of support from appropriate experts.
  - There is no rule of thumb, but the larger the budget request, the more important it is to get outside reviewers.
  - Letters are also important if the project deals with content that may not have obvious value; eg., Charles W. Cushman Collection.

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