INTRODUCTION TO PROPOSAL WRITING

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UW Tacoma Office of Research
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A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

Identifying **funding**
A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

- Identifying **funding**
- Preparing **to write**
A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

- Identifying **funding**
- Preparing **to write**
- **Writing** the proposal
A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

- Identifying funding
- Preparing to write
- Writing the proposal
- Refining the proposal
A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

Identifying funding

Preparing to write

Writing the proposal

Refining the proposal

Submitting the proposal
A ROADMAP TO PROPOSAL WRITING

- Identifying funding
- Preparing to write
- Writing the proposal
- Refining the proposal
- Submitting the proposal
- Dealing with the decision
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tip:

“Approach proposal writing as you would a scholarly project: start early, collaborate with experts (especially our wonderful UWT staff), get feedback, [try to] **enjoy it as an intellectually stimulating activity** (not just something to cross off the do list).”
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tip:

“Choose a project that you are truly passionate about, something that aligns with your core values. That conviction will come through in the proposal process.”
SETTLING ON A TOPIC

- Aligns with your passions and long-term goals in your/your institution's 'wheelhouse'.
- Compelling, salient, fundable.
SETTLING ON A TOPIC

- compelling, salient, fundable
- in your/your institution’s ‘wheelhouse’
- aligns with your passions and long-term goals

Avoid ‘throwing spaghetti’ – the sponsor is likely to feel this
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Resources:

• Learn from your colleagues
• Be nosy!
• Direct email alerts from sponsors
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Grants Resource Center (GRC)

http://www.aascu.org/GRC

username: tacoma
password: connection
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Grants Resource Center (GRC):

• ‘GrantSearch’ database of recurring funding opportunities

http://www.aascu.org/GRC/gs/
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• Faculty Alert Tool

http://www.aascu.org/GRC/alerts/
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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- ‘GrantSearch’ database of recurring funding opportunities
- Faculty Alert Tool
- Customized funding searches – work with Kara

http://www.aascu.org/GRC/fsform
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Grants Resource Center (GRC):

• ‘GrantSearch’ database of recurring funding opportunities
• Faculty Alert Tool
• Customized funding searches – work with Kara
• Weekly/monthly alerts:
  – “Bulletin” – non-recurring (mostly federal), twice/week
  – “Deadlines” – recurring (federal and private), once/month

Contact Kara if interested in receiving
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Other Resources:

- Grants.gov

https://www.grants.gov/
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Other Resources:

• Grants.gov
• GrantForward

https://www.grantforward.com/index
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Other Resources:

• Grants.gov
• GrantForward
• Foundation Center – Library

http://foundationcenter.org/newsletters
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Leverage internal grants:
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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Royalty Research Fund (RRF)
http://uw.edu/research/or/royalty-research-fund-rrf/
  - Up to $40K; 1 year; ~20% success rate (UWT)
  - “Advance new directions in research”
  - Deadlines: September, March
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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**Global Innovation Fund (GIF)**
https://www.washington.edu/globalaffairs/gif/
- Up to $20K (usually much smaller); 1 year
- “Initial support for initiatives and programs that enhance UW's global reach”
- Deadline: November
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

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UW Population Health Initiative Pilot Research Grants
https://www.washington.edu/populationhealth/resources/funding-and-awards/pilot-research-grants/
- Up to $50K; 1 year
- “New interdisciplinary collaborations ... that address critical components of the Population Health Initiative”
- Deadline: February
IDENTIFYING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Leverage internal grants

https://www.tacoma.uw.edu/office-research/finding-funding

Finding funding

Faculty interested in seeking funding for their research are encouraged to make an appointment with the Office Of Research at UW Tacoma to discuss their research goals and funding sources. The following list of funding sources is not comprehensive, but is meant to be a starting point in seeking funding.

Internal grants: UW System

- UW Royalty Research Fund
- UW Global Innovation Fund
- UW Population Health Pilot Grants
- UW Innovation Awards
- UW Undergraduate Research Program
- UW Simpson Center for the Humanities
- Institute for Translational Health Sciences
- Amazon Catalyst
- UW Provost Bridge Funding Program
PREPARING TO WRITE

You found an opportunity –
Let the proposal writing begin!? 
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Let the proposal writing begin!?
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 1: Dig in to the Solicitation/Request for Proposal (RFP) - it is your guide!

Small Research Grants Application Guidelines

The guidelines below are meant to clarify questions about the Spencer Foundation's online application and provide details about what will be requested. We recommend referencing these guidelines as you complete your Small Grant application online. The online system is configured for the Principal Investigator (PI) on the project to register and submit the application. If someone other than the PI will be completing the application (e.g., an administrative assistant), the PI should register as described in Step 1 below, and then provide their username and password to the individual who will assist them with the application.

Step 1 - Registration
If you (the PI) have never accessed the Spencer Foundation online system, you must register and create a profile by going...
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 1: Solicitation/RFP – what to look for:
PREPARING TO WRITE...

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• Deadlines
  • Required/recommended pre-proposal (e.g. Letter of Intent, LOI)
  • Inquiries/questions
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- **Eligibility**
  - Limited submission
  - Individual and institutional eligibility
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- **Deadlines**
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- **Eligibility**
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- **Basic instructions** – grants are rejected if they don’t follow these
  - Submission
  - Required sections, headings
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 1: Solicitation/RFP – what to look for:

• Deadlines
  • Required/recommended pre-proposal (e.g. Letter of Intent, LOI)
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• Eligibility
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• Budget requirements – travel, reporting, other required costs

We are here to help!
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 1: **Solicitation/RFP – a deeper look:**

- **Project fit**
  - Key words – e.g. “high risk,” “basic research,” “applied”
  - Specific program areas – make sure your projects fits within
  - If concerned, consider approaching the Program Officer
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 1: Solicitation/RFP – a deeper look:

- **Project fit**
  - Key words – e.g. “high risk,” “basic research,” “applied”
  - Specific program areas – make sure your projects fits within
  - If concerned, consider approaching the Program Officer

- **Key ‘buzzwords’** – reviewers expect to see this language!
  - Make a list of these to use verbatim in the proposal!
  - Look closely at review criteria for language that doesn’t appear elsewhere
  - Also look in mission statements, strategic plans

We are here to help!
Step 2: **Understand the sponsor’s objectives**
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- Funder does NOT exist to fund the research you want to do;
  - They exist to fund their objectives/priorities
PREPARING TO WRITE...

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- Look to RFP for explicit statements about objectives/priorities
  - Absorb the sponsor’s language so you can speak it
**PREPARING TO WRITE...**

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- Objectives vary widely by funder
  - Federal: Very specific funding priorities
  - Foundations: Carrying on the legacy of the founder
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  - Absorb the sponsor’s language so you can speak it
- Objectives vary widely by funder
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  - Foundations: Carrying on the legacy of the founder
- Your work:
  - To demonstrate how you will achieve their priorities
  - Gain their confidence that you have an achievable plan and ability
Step 2: **Understand the sponsor’s objectives**

- Consider Program Officer’s/Director’s incentives
  - Help them achieve them
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- Look at types of projects, PIs, and institutions that have been funded
  - Federal: Advanced searches
  - Foundations: Often list past recipients
Note: RePORTER will be temporarily unavailable for system updates today between 8 p.m. (ET) and 10 p.m. (ET). We apologize for any inconvenience.

https://projectreporter.nih.gov/reporter.cfm
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Awards Advanced Search

Overview of Award Search Features

Awardee Information

1. Principal Investigator First Name
2. Principal Investigator Last Name
3. Include Co-Principal Investigator in name search
4. Organization
5. State
6. Zip Code
7. Country

Program Information

1. NSF Organization
2. Element Code
3. Reference Code
4. Program

HINT: The "Program" box searches both program element and program reference names and codes.

https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/advancedSearch.jsp
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Past Awards
Below are the most recent grants awarded in this program. For more information about these projects, and to view other grants made in this program, please go to the Grant Library here and choose Small Grant from the "Grant Type" menu.

Sara Anderson
West Virginia University Research Corporation
"Access and Barriers to Professional Development for the Child Care Workforce: Differences across the Urban-Rural Spectrum"

Amy Binder and Jeffrey L. Kidder
University of California, San Diego
"The New Era of Campus Politics: Struggles over Ideology and Identity in Four Battleground States"

Natasha Cabrera and Kelly S. Mix
University of Maryland at College Park
"The influence of low-income fathers' and mothers' talk on their children's math development" Allison DiBlanca Fasoli
Middlebury College
"Navigating Science and Religion: Children's Reasoning and Parent-Child Conversations in Evangelical Christian Families"

Rachel Elizabeth Fish
New York University
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tip:

“Proposal writing is a two phase proposal. First, write a proposal for whatever you believe is awesome. Second, submit the proposal that the funding agency is willing to fund. In other words: Read the RFP carefully to identify the intersection between what you believe is worth doing and what the funding agency is willing to support.”
UW Tacoma Faculty Pro-Tip:

“Proposal writing is a two phase proposal. First, write a proposal for whatever you believe is awesome. Second, submit the proposal that the funding agency is willing to fund. In other words: Read the RFP carefully to identify the intersection between what you believe is worth doing and what the funding agency is willing to support.”

“Know the mission of the agency”
UW Tacoma Faculty
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“Know the mission of the agency”

“Try to remember all sponsors need to spend their money; a proposal should help them identify a good way to spend it. In other words, find out their priorities and meet them.”
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 3: Understand the review process and reviewers
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 3: **Understand the review process and reviewers**

- **Actual humans!**
  - Reviewer rosters
  - List of Program Officers/Directors
  - Advisory Boards
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- Criteria often boils down to:
  - Is the idea good?
  - Will it make a “difference”
  - Are you the right person/people to do it?
PREPARING TO WRITE...

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- Criteria often boils down to:
  - Is the idea good?
  - Will it make a “difference”
  - Are you the right person/people to do it?

- Most often explicitly stated in RFP

*We are here to help!*
NSF Merit Review Criteria

Proposals assessed based on potential to...

1a) ...advance knowledge within a field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit)
1b) ...benefit society or advance desired societal impacts (Broader Impacts)
2) ...explore creative, original, or transformative concepts

And the extent to which...

3) ...the plan for carrying out activities is well-reasoned, well-organized and based on sound rationale
4) ...the individual/team is well-qualified to conduct the activities
5) ...there are adequate resources available to the PI(s)
Small Research Grants Program Review Criteria

The review process for small grant proposals is thorough and careful. After an initial staff review, the strongest proposals are sent to successful established external reviewers. Based on their ratings and staff recommendations, a limited number of proposals are funded. We currently receive over 800 proposals per year, and have been able to fund roughly 10% of them.

Reviewers are expected to comment on the following:

- Significance of research questions
- Appropriateness of research design
- Adequacy of budget and timeline
- Potential of the PI(s) to conduct a study of high quality
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tip:

“Learn as much as you can about the people who are going to be reviewing the applications. While an organization, foundation, government agency, etc. writes the check, humans pick the winners.”
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 4: Contact the Office of Research

• Let us review the RFP and help you in thinking through the details
• Questions about eligibility/requirements
• Proposal writing/submission timeline
• Often helpful to discuss your conceptual framework together
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 5: **Contact your Dean/Director and letter writers**

- Get Dean/Director started on a letter if necessary
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- Get Dean/Director started on a letter if necessary
- Get others started on letters as necessary
- Letters of recommendations – an important part of the story
  - Particularly for foundation grants
  - Get started **well** ahead of the deadline
  - Speak to your intellectual and collaborative contributions, strengths
  - Your potential, within the **specific context** of the funding opportunity
  - Perhaps, why you were selected to be a faculty member
- **We can help think through suggested content!**
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 6: **Obtain funded proposals**

- Refer to throughout the proposal development/writing process


- We can liaise with GRC to track down additional proposals
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 7: **Lay out the puzzle pieces**

- Logic models and conceptual frameworks can be very useful
Objectives

**LONG-TERM OUTCOMES**

- Increase involvement of parents associated with FIP in their children's education
- Increase parents' levels of involvement in their children's education – parents work closely with school systems and seek leadership positions
- Establish FIP sustainability

*Source: Grant Training Center, Project Strategy & Design Workbook (2017)*
Project Aims

**SHORT-TERM OUTCOMES**

- Increase number of parents in communities who are trained by parent leaders on parent involvement
- Increase parent knowledge on how to become involved in their children's education
- Build or strengthen local collaborations at each site to promote and sustain parent involvement
- Increase awareness of and commitment to FIP and its sustainability

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Objectives

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PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 7: **Lay out the puzzle pieces**

- Outlines make writing easier!
  - Lay out required sections and headings
  - ‘Plug’ review criteria and key buzzwords directly into sections
PREPARING TO WRITE...

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1) Title/Cover Page
2) Project Summary and/or Abstract
3) Project Narrative/Description
   - Background/Motivation
   - Existing Literature
   - Research Questions/Objectives/Specific Aims
   - Research Plan/Procedure
   - Contributions/Broader Impacts
   - Evaluation/Assessment Plan
4) References Cited
5) Curriculum Vitae/Biosketches
6) Timeline
7) Budget and Budget Justification
8) Supplementary Documents
   - Current and Pending Support
   - Facilities and Equipment
   - Letters of Recommendation/Support
   - Data Management Plan
   - Institutional Certifications
   - PI Leadership Plan
   - Postdoc Mentoring Plan
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 8: **Budget**

- The budget ‘drives’ the narrative
- Identify the resources necessary to complete project activities
- Consult RFP for (non-)allowable expenses, overhead/F&A, etc.

We are here for you!
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 9: Contact the Program Officer/Director

We can help!
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tips:

“You should **ALWAYS contact your program officer** before you submit your proposal (or even before you start writing). I know that sounds scary, but they genuinely want to help and are willing to hear your pitch. Then when you get the grant, **keep in touch** about your progress. **Cultivate the relationship** for long-term success.”
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“Reach out to sponsors to **develop relationships**. Learn what their funding priorities are, tell them what you are interested in, and stay in touch. **Offer to be a resource.**”
UW Tacoma Faculty Pro-Tips:

“For every grant I’ve applied for, meeting with the Program Director (preferably face-to-face) has been the most helpful thing, both pre-award insight and post-review feedback... I’ve found that the PD wants to know who you are, where you are in your career, and what you are trying to do... Turn them into your advocate... and [let them] promote [your] competitiveness.”
Step 10: **Think some more!**

- Refine your conceptual framework and proposed activities based on feedback from Program Officer
PREPARING TO WRITE...

Step 11: **Proposal writing timeline/milestones**

- Shorter the requirements, longer you should plan to work
- Create a timeline for requests
- Keep in mind the UW Office of Sponsored Research (OSP) deadlines – 7 business days in advance

We are here to help!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

At this point you have...
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

At this point you have...

...a thorough grasp on the solicitation/RFP

...a strong understanding of the sponsor’s priorities, review process, and likely reviewers

...contacted the Office of Research and ensured eligibility

...let Dean/Director and letter writers know

...developed your conceptual framework and articulated project objectives, aims, and activities

...discussed your project with the Program Officer

...a rough budget

...a timeline for completing the proposal
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Time to start writing!
Every proposal is a sales pitch.
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Your work is to tell a coherent, compelling story....
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Your work is to tell a coherent, compelling story....

• You are selling “stock” in your work; your idea is an investment
  • Funder wants to trust that you will provide a high return
  • Show how your past success predict future success
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- The reviewer should leave as excited about the idea as you are
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• The reviewer should leave as excited about the idea as you are
• But, remember: You are building career-long relationships
  • Avoid ‘dazzling today, disappointing tomorrow’
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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...quickly
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...quickly

• Imperative to catch readers attention in first page
• The “20 minute rule”*
Like a good sales pitch, good proposals have a narrative arc.

- Exposition
- Complication
- Climax
- Resolution
- Denouement
• There is a Big Problem
• It’s really, really important because...

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**Background/Motivation**
• We know some things about this problem...
• But we don’t know some other really important things about it
• And it is critical that we fill these gaps in our knowledge because...

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**Literature Review**
• Luckily, I/we have a brilliant idea for how to fill these gaps in our knowledge!

• Here are the specific objectives I/will achieve in filling these gaps

_____________

Research Question(s)/Objectives/Specific Aims
This is the plan for how I/we will do so...
It is a good plan because...
I/we are the right people to carry out this plan...
I/we will assess the validity of our findings by...

Research Plan/Procedure
The proposal will have a considerable impact on…
- State of knowledge in my field
- Society
- My career

Expected Contributions/Broader Impacts
Different emphases for different funders
“The Foolproof Research Proposal Template”

LARGE GENERAL TOPIC OF WIDE INTEREST
(Global Warming, Immigration, Cancer, Etc.)

Brief Ref. to Literature I  Brief Ref. to Literature II

“HOWEVER, scholars in these fields have
not yet adequately addressed XXXX…”

GAP IN KNOWLEDGE

1. Urgency: This gap is bad!!!
2. HERO Narrative: I will fill this gap!!!

YOUR RESEARCH QUESTION
“I am applying to XXX to support my research on XXX”

SPECIFICS OF YOUR PROJECT
(background info, location, history, context, limitations, etc.)

LITERATURE REVIEW (Multi-page, thorough, accurate, relevant)

METHODOLOGY (Discipline specific)

TIMELINE (Month by month plan)

BUDGET (Realistic and legitimate expenses)

STRONG CONCLUSION!!!
(“I expect this research to contribute to debates on xxxxxxx”)

Source: https://theprofessorisin.com/2011/07/05/dr-karens-foolproof-grant-template/
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Keep your reviewer in mind:
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Keep your reviewer in mind:

- A scientifically-literate, but uninformed reader
  - Do not assume existing knowledge about your topic
  - But, be careful not to “talk down” to readers with more expertise
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• Observe the sponsor’s language in the RFP, then speak it
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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  • Do not assume existing knowledge about your topic
  • But, be careful not to “talk down” to readers with more expertise

• Observe the sponsor’s language in the RFP, then speak it

• Respect the reader’s time and energy; Make it easy for them
  • Do not make the reader think or look anything up!
  • Be explicit: It is your job to connect the dots, not the reader’s
Aim for predictable action movie
UW Tacoma Faculty Pro-Tips:

“Your job is to recruit a champion [on the review panel] who is excited and enthusiastic about the work you propose to do.”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Research Question(s) / Objectives / Aims

Tips:

• Questions and aims should be clear, specific, measurable
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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• Straightforward connection between questions and aims
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WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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• Typically 1-2 overarching aims, 2-4 objectives (although varies)
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Research Question(s) / Objectives / Aims

Tips:

• Questions and aims should be clear, specific, measurable
• Straightforward connection between questions and aims
• Scope should be reasonable and defensible given time and budget
• Typically 1-2 overarching aims, 2-4 objectives (although varies)
• Delineate between preliminary work completed and work proposed
  • Clearly explain what you have found
  • Then, how the proposed work will build on preliminary findings
• Aims should not incorporate completed work
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Research Plan / Procedure

Tips:

• Leave no pragmatic question unaddressed
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Research Plan / Procedure

Tips:

• Leave no pragmatic question unaddressed

• Always explain the “how”
  • Not just “I will measure...”
  • But, “I will measure X by Y metrics using Z instrument”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Research Plan / Procedure

Tips:

• Leave no pragmatic question unaddressed

• Always explain the “how”
  • Not just “I will measure…”
  • But, “I will measure X by Y metrics using Z instrument”

• Logic/workflow model can help, if not included elsewhere
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Research Plan / Procedure

Tips:

• Leave no pragmatic question unaddressed

• Always explain the “how”
  • Not just “I will measure…”
  • But, “I will measure X by Y metrics using Z instrument”

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**WRITING THE PROPOSAL**

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  - Not just “I will measure...”
  - But, “I will measure X by Y metrics using Z instrument”
- Logic/workflow model can help, if not included elsewhere
- Timeline can help here, if not included elsewhere
- Seek to establish credibility
  - Communicated by how competently you present the research plan
  - What are you doing now – cite prior work, modestly
  - What you will do better with the proposed funding
“Pilot data helps. Essentially, what have you tried (learned) as you have pursued this line of research? **Funders want to see that you have been working on these ideas;** that you have some evidence or more questions, and now need additional research support to investigate further.”
“Pilot data helps. Essentially, what have you tried (learned) as you have pursued this line of research? Funders want to see that you have been working on these ideas; that you have some evidence or more questions, and now need additional research support to investigate further.”

“Write a grant that matches your ‘credit’ gained from education and work experience.”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Contributions / Broader Impacts

Tips:

• Contributions to scholarship
  • Within and outside your field
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Contributions / Broader Impacts

Tips:

• Contributions to scholarship
  • Within and outside your field

• Contributions to society / public at large
  • Envision the world with the problem solved
  • Both direct and indirect impact of findings, related activities
  • Benefits to specific populations of students, workforce, public
  • Partnerships developed between academia, industry, community
  • National security, economic competitiveness
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  • Partnerships developed between academia, industry, community
  • National security, economic competitiveness

• Contributions to your research program
  • “Priming the pump”
  • Supporting your long-term research agenda
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tips:

“Be clear and specific on your purpose, plan of action, and definitions when writing your narrative. For example, vague references to [social] equity in the broader impact section will not cut it. You need to make your research compelling. Be specific.”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Narrative: Final words

Tips:

• Decisions are made within the first two pages

• Always make room for a strong final paragraph
  • These are the last words reviewers will read
  • Tell them what to write in their review!

• Art of proposal writing:
  • Not to **understate** impacts – not the time for humility
  • But, **overstating** can make reviewers distrustful
“Always lead with a major question you are going to ask... [then] *return to that central question throughout.*”
UW Tacoma Faculty Pro-Tips:

“Always lead with a major question you are going to ask... [then] return to that central question throughout.”

“[Make sure] the proposal addresses the RFP objectives in the strongest terms you can think of.”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

All components contribute to the story...
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

All components contribute to the story...

Letters of recommendation
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

All components contribute to the story...

Letters of recommendation

Curriculum Vitae / Biographical Sketches

• Use to bolster your story – don’t submit a multi-purpose CV
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• The budget drives the story
• Must be reasonable, justifiable, and consistent with your narrative
• Ensure that you can afford to do what you say you will do
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We are here to help!
## Gantt charts – An example

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Source: Grant Training Center, Project Strategy & Design Workbook (2017)
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

All components contribute to the story...

Title

- An important piece of your sales pitch!
- Catchy, but not cutesy – goal is to standout, but not annoy
- Try to stay away from questions
- Easily understandable – often used to assign reviewers
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Bibliography/References

- Some reviewers may read this first
- Communicates that author understands current state of field and will not duplicate others’ efforts
- Cite, don’t slight – reviewers may be slighted!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Using the UW Tacoma context to your advantage
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Using the UW Tacoma context to your advantage

• Predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI)
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Using the UW Tacoma context to your advantage

• Predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI)

• Students served
  • Approximately half (52%) transfer from 2-year colleges
  • Less than 45% Caucasian
  • Designated ‘Asian American and Native America Pacific Islander Serving Institution’ (AANAPISI)
  • 20% enrolled through military benefits (active, veteran, child/spouse)
  • Other, that aligns with the RFP?
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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  • Context of Tacoma and South Sound, generally
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We can help in framing our context for the specific opportunity
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Structure matters!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Structure matters!

• Each paragraph tells a discrete story
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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• Each section has its own narrative arc
  • Declarative headings can be very helpful to orienting reviewers
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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• Each paragraph tells a discrete story

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  • Declarative headings can be very helpful to orienting reviewers

• First and last paragraphs of each section important
  • Reviewers not likely to read the whole proposal
  • Closing paragraphs: Synthesize – nothing should be a surprise
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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• Use active, energetic language
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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  • Often (but not always) this means active voice
    – e.g. “Pls will conduct spatial analysis” (NOT “spatial analysis will be conducted”)
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    – e.g. “PIs will conduct spatial analysis” (NOT “spatial analysis will be conducted”)
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  – e.g. a lot, really, very, exciting
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• Avoid platitudes – don’t assume that reviewers share your values
  – e.g. “We must save the speckled brown tree frog from extinction”
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Language matters!

• Confident *(we will, I aim)* vs. “hedging” *(might, could, try)*
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Language matters!

• Confident (we will, I aim) vs. “hedging” (might, could, try)

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• Jargon vs. Technical terms
  • Would you use it in conversation? If not – don’t use in proposal
  • Technical terms collapse complex concepts into a single term – DEFINE!
  • Avoid opportunities for reviewer feel uninformed
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  • Avoid opportunities for reviewer feel uninformed

• Never complain
  • Don’t give reviewers a reason to dismiss your proposal
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Brevity matters!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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- Think critically about whether details help the story, or distract from it
  - Reading aloud, or having read aloud to you can help
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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- Every word serves a purpose – minimize unnecessary ‘fluff’
  - e.g. “It has been shown that...”; “Indeed, one might argue...”
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  • e.g. “It has been shown that...”; “Indeed, one might argue...”

• Do not use formatting to achieve brevity
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Formatting matters – No grumpy reviewers!

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The close connection between transportation and housing affordability has gained widespread acknowledgement in recent years, largely in response to two related concerns. One about a ‘live–lyceum’ quality mentality that emphasizes social and environmental issues associated with auto dependency as households are attracted to expensive housing in far-flung suburban areas and another about housing costs in transit accessible areas and associated threats of direct and exclusionary displacement among low- and moderate-income households. Yet despite this newfound recognition, the ways we typically measure housing affordability have received very little critical attention, particularly as it relates to transportation decision-making. In this paper, I critically examine the two measures of housing affordability commonly used in the context of transportation planning and management (the ‘value’ and ‘location affordability’ measures) and introduce a third (the ‘Location-Sensitive Residual Income’ measure) that addresses many of the former’s shortcomings. I then apply the three measures to an empirical case in order to understand the extent to which they lead to differing conclusions about the supply of affordable rental housing in the Denver metropolitan region. Findings from this empirical analysis demonstrate the importance of understanding how different measures characterize – and possibly mischaracterize – the social impacts and benefits of transportation infrastructure and service on housing affordability for households with limited means.

The ‘value’ measure

Most measures of housing affordability used in the context of transportation planning and management attempt to account for the relationship between housing costs and household income. The most common of these – the ‘value’ measure – considers housing to be affordable if it consumes less than a defined threshold (typically 30%) of income. Under a ratio approach, households spending more than 30% of their income on housing (rent or homeownership costs) are considered ‘cost burdened’; those spending more than 50% of household income on housing are considered an ‘extremely cost burdened’. There is no particular theoretical or empirical basis for the use of a 30% threshold (Stone 2000); rather, the threshold is rooted in a normative ‘rule of thumb’ first adopted by Burns in the 1950s based on the idea that no more than one week’s income should go to housing (Newman and Holian 1998). This threshold, which is computationally straightforward and intuitive for policymakers and the general public, has been widely adopted as the primary measure of housing affordability by federal, state, and local agencies responsible for setting housing policy. Most notably, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) uses the 30% threshold to determine eligibility for publicly subsidized rental housing and homeownership programs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Policy Development and Research 2019).

Despite its widespread use, the ratio approach is subject to much criticism from both scholars and advocates (see, for example, Delo and Drown 2002; Hernandez and Con 1999; Hultsman 1998; Hertz 2010; Stone 2000; Kitty 2005). The first, and perhaps most significant, shortcoming of the ratio measure is its insensitivity to differences in household income. A low-income household spending 30% of its income on housing will have much less remaining for food, healthcare, taxes, childcare and other necessities as compared to a higher income household also spending 50% of its income on housing. Yet, based on the ratio measure of affordable housing, both households are considered ‘cost burdened’. Ratio measures also often fail to account for differences between households with characteristics and financial circumstances. In particular, they are insensitive to the effects of differences in household size, the presence of children, or the presence of non-income-related expenses, any of which have a large impact on the true housing costs incurred. For example, a single parent of two children earning 50% of area median income (AMI) is likely to spend a much larger portion of their income meeting its basic non-housing needs (and thus feel the crunch of high housing costs) compared to a two adult household with no children earning the same income. Ratio measures also do not account for the cost of childcare, which often exceed housing costs for many families with young children (Zimmerman 2014).

The ‘location affordability’ measure

The location of affordability measure also utilizes a threshold-based approach, but accounts for the joint effects of housing and transportation (H+T) costs such that housing is considered to be affordable if combined H+T costs consume less than 30% of income. The location affordability approach has its origins at the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) to encourage and a more comprehensive view of housing affordability through consideration of transportation costs associated with different housing locations. In many regions, housing costs tend to be lowest in the auto oriented suburban fringe, yet these same areas are likely to lack employment opportunities, amenities, and non-auto transportation options – all factors which contribute to higher transportation costs. Proponents of the location affordability (or ‘location efficiency’) approach therefore argue that although housing in neighborhoods with close proximity to jobs, the ability to walk or bike to shopping and dining, and the availability of transit and non-motorized transportation options may be more costly, high housing costs are likely to be offset by lower transportation costs. The adage ‘you get what you pay for’ describes these tradeoffs. While housing and single-family homes in particular, may be cheaper in far-flung areas of the region, reliance on auto modes are likely to render transportation costs much higher as compared to more central areas with higher housing costs. For instance, CNT found that in some heavily auto-dependent neighborhoods of Washington, D.C., transportation costs comprise as much as 30% of income, while in more accessible areas they are as low as 10 percent (CNT 2011).

The original H+T Index has gained considerable traction since its inception in 2000. The U.S. H+T launched its own Location Affordability Index based on the CNT model in 2013 and have subsequently incorporated a much more sophisticated methodology to predict housing and transportation costs for eight different household profiles (Hast, Newmark, and Morrison 2016; U.S. Department of Housing and
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Formatting matters – No grumpy reviewers!

• Follow directions!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Formatting matters – No grumpy reviewers!

- Follow directions!
- 1” margins
- No more than 6 lines of text/inch
- Legible font, 11 point min.
- Maximize white space

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

The close connection between transportation and housing affordability has gained widespread acknowledgment in recent years, largely in response to two related concerns: One about a “drive ‘til you qualify” mentality that exacerbates social and environmental issues associated with auto-dependency as households are attracted to intransitive housing in far-flung suburban areas and another about rising housing costs in transit-accessible areas and associated threats of direct and exclusionary displacement among low- and moderate-income households. Yet despite this newfound recognition, the ways we typically measure housing affordability have received very little critical attention, particularly as it relates to transportation decision-making. In this paper, I critically examine the two measures of housing affordability commonly used in the context of transportation planning and management (the “ratio” and “location affordability” measures) and introduce a third (the “Location-Sensitive Residual Income” measure) that addresses many of the former’s shortcomings. I then apply the three measures to an empirical case in order to understand the extent to which they lead to differing conclusions about the supply of affordable rental housing in the Denver metropolitan region. Findings from this empirical analysis demonstrate the importance of understanding how different measures characterize – and possibly mischaracterize – the social impacts and benefits of transportation infrastructure and service on housing affordability for households with limited means.

The “ratio” measure

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Ratio measures also often fail to account for differences between households with characteristics and financial circumstances, in particular, they are often insensitive to household size and the presence of children, both of which have a large impact on the non-housing costs incurred. For example, a single-parent of two children earning 50-percent area median income (AMI) is likely to spend a much larger portion of its income meeting its basic non-housing needs (and thus feel the crunch of high housing costs) compared to a two adult household with no children earning the same income. Ratio measures also do not account for the cost of childcare, which often exceed housing costs for many families with young children (Glaeser 2014).

The “location affordability” measure

The location affordability measure also utilizes a threshold-based approach, but accounts for the joint effects of housing and transportation (H+T) costs such that housing is considered to be affordable if combined H+T costs consume less than 45-percent of income. The location affordability approach has its origins in efforts by the Center for Neighborhood Technology (CNT) to encourage a more comprehensive view of housing affordability through
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Despite its widespread use, the ratio approach is subject to much criticism from both scholars and advocates (e.g., for example, Botsis & Drow 2007, Bogdon & Can 1997, Huchenson 1999; Hertz 2010; Stone 2006; Klotz 2005). The first, and perhaps most significant, shortcoming of the ratio measure is its insensitivity to differences in household income. A low-income household spending 50 percent of its income on housing will have much less remaining for food, healthcare, taxes, childcare and other necessities as compared to a higher-income household also spending 50 percent of its income on housing. Yet, based on the ratio measure of affordable housing, both households are considered “cost-burdened.”

Ratio measures also fail to account for differences between households with characteristics and financial circumstances. In particular, they are often insensitive to household size and the presence of children, both of which have a large impact on the non-housing costs incurred. For example, a single-parent of two children earning 80 percent area median income (AMI) is likely to spend a much larger portion of its income meeting its basic non-housing needs (and thus feel the crunch of high housing costs) compared to a two adult household with no children earning the same income. Ratio measures also do not account for the cost of childcare, which often exceed housing costs for many families with young children (Glassmeyer 2014).

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WRITING THE PROPOSAL

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- Typos make it easy for the reviewer to dismiss your proposal
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

The Goal: No grumpy reviewers!
WRITING THE PROPOSAL

The Goal: No grumpy reviewers!

- Title/Number
- Legend
- Placed next to the reference text
- Legible – size and clarity
- Don’t assume printed in color
“The quality of the proposal really matters. Sitting on a review panel I saw plenty of mediocre, but well-presented proposals get funded, and good, but poorly-packaged proposals get rejected.”
REFINING THE PROPOSAL

Improving as a proposal writer

• Write proposals!
• Read your proposals aloud!
• Review successful proposals
• Become a reviewer!
  • NSF, in particular
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro–Tip:

“Seek out opportunities to serve on a review panel – it is one of the best things you can do to understand how reviewers think and improve your proposal writing”
REFINING THE PROPOSAL

Improving as a proposal writer

• Work with an editor!
  • Can help you articulate key points you want to convey *before* writing
  • Ask critical questions, sharpen thinking
  • Point to areas of confusion, prompt possible solutions
  • Can pick up on patterns that you may not see
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• Academic editing – different levels

  Proofreading – spelling, grammar, word choice

  Stylistic (line) editing – syntax (sentence) level

  Developmental editing – argument level
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LONGER LEAD TIME
SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL
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Start early!
SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

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• A good goal: Solid internal draft to Office of Research (10) business days prior
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• Engage us from the outset
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- All routed through UW Office of Sponsored Research (OSP)
  - This takes time
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• Engage us from the outset

• Can be helpful to work through iterative drafts throughout the proposal process

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  • This takes time – let us help you think through a timeline
SUBMITTING THE PROPOSAL

UW System to Administer Grants Electronically (SAGE)

• All proposals must be submitted through SAGE
• Requires an eGC1 (electronic Grants and Contracts Form 1)
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• All proposals must be submitted through SAGE
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We are here to help!
“Start early - if this year's deadline is approaching, consider aiming for NEXT year's deadline to give yourself enough time to write a quality proposal.”
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“Take it seriously. Put the work into it to make it excellent.”
DEALING WITH THE DECISION

Your submission is awarded

- Rejoice!
- Let us know so we can celebrate and track your successes
DEALING WITH THE DECISION

Your submission is awarded

• Rejoice!
• Let us know so we can celebrate and track your successes

Your submission is not awarded

• An inevitable part of the process – a ‘growth’ opportunity
• Set aside reviews until you are in a space to receive them
• Take a deep breath – reviews are not personal attacks
• Think of grants(person)ship as a sport
  • Take the opportunity to better understand the rules and improve
  • Engage your team, including the Office of Research!
• Keep playing – persistence pays off
“Don’t get discouraged about rejections, most ideas take a lot of time and effort, and some iterations to develop fully into a strong research project.”
UW Tacoma Faculty
Pro-Tip:

“Don’t get discouraged about rejections, most ideas take a lot of time and effort, and some iterations to develop fully into a strong research project.”

“Don't give up. **Be persistent.** Don't take negative critique personally. It is ok to re-submit and try again. Very few investigators get their proposals funded in their first try. If you try, the probability is admittedly low. But if you don't try, the probability is zero.”
WE ARE HERE FOR YOU!

Please do not hesitate to contact us:

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