

“There is no grantsmanship that will turn a bad idea into a good one, but there are many ways to disguise a good idea.” - Norm Braverman, NIH

GRANT WRITING 101

COBEC 2021
Michael Odell, Ph.D.
UT Tyler

Note: This presentation has been adapted from multiple sources.

WHAT KEEPS US FROM PURSUING GRANTS?



- Fear of rejection
 - **Reality** - only one proposal in 5 is turned down because the idea wasn't good enough
 - **Reality** - A rejected proposal is worth about \$10,000 of free advice
 - **Reality** - the success rate is higher for proposals turned in a second time
 - **Reality** - the success rate on a third submission is almost 1:1

NOT ENOUGH TIME

- Writing is like an Olympic event
 - needs constant practice.
- Write everyday at a regular time in the same place. 20 minutes
- If you don't sit there every day, the day that it would have come well - you won't be there.



JUST DO IT!



KEYS TO SUCCESS



Innovation and Creativity is important

- Looking for new solutions to old problems
- How do you create creativity?

Calling the Program Officer is the most important element

- 85% of all successful grant seekers have had contact with the program officer



THE PROPOSAL PROCESS IS NEVER WASTED

- Can't get a grant unless you write a proposal
- Professionally fulfilling
- Requires you to focus your thoughts
- Armed with reviewers comments the second proposal is always stronger
- Notes:
 - It helps to be published in the area you are pursuing.
 - Calculate the odds
 - Having published journal articles in the area is **ESSENTIAL** for Research Grants

WHAT IS A GRANT?

- A Grant is a conditional gift or a conveyance of funds with strings attached.
- The funding source identifies the problem they want addressed, but no outcome is known.
- The idea originates with the grantee.

TYPES OF FUNDING

- **Grant - Assistance**
 - purpose is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose
 - No substantial involvement is anticipated between the sponsor and the recipient
- **Cooperative Agreement - Assistance**
 - substantial involvement between sponsor and recipient
- **Contract - Procurement**
 - acquire property or services for direct benefit or use of the funding source

GRANT VS. CONTRACT

▪ Grant

- project conceived by investigator
- agency supports or assists
- performer defines details and retains scientific freedom
- agency maintains oversight

▪ Contract

- project conceived by agency
- agency procures service
- agency exercises direction or control
- agency closely monitors

TYPES OF GRANTS

- Research
- Curriculum
- Demonstration
- Training
- Equipment
- Fellowships
- Federal Laboratory Research
- Service

GETTING STARTED

- Start out small and build a track record
 - institutional grants
 - supplemental grants - NSF (10% funding rate)
 - new investigator programs (w/i 5 yrs)
 - competition is level

QUALITIES OF EFFECTIVE GRANT WRITING

- Quality of the idea and its appeal to the funding source
- The ability to communicate clearly and concisely
- The ability to be persuasive

THE PROCESS

- A good idea
- A good institutional fit
- Assemble a winning team
- Match the idea to a sponsor
- Read the Guidelines
- Read them again
- Contact the sponsor
- Plan in detail
- Develop the budget from the detailed plan
- Read the guidelines again with narrative in mind
- Be persistent - revise and resubmit

IDEA

- An idea is something that only exists in your mind.
- Your task is to present the idea in a fundable proposal (persuasion).
- Take a vague idea and identify a specific problem or need associated with it.



FINDING A FUNDING SOURCE

- Funding Opportunity Search Engines
- Keywords.
- The Grants Bulletin
- Grant Watch
- Examples:
 - <https://www.iaf.gov/country/belize/>

IS IT THE RIGHT GRANT?

▪ Government

- Are you eligible?
- Can you meet match?
- How many funded?
- How much money?
- Change to meet guidelines?
- Do you have the required background?
- Are you credible?

▪ Private

- Institutional Advancement
- Geographic
- Who do they fund?
- Range?
- Type of project?
- Interest, but no grants
- Change to meet priorities?
- Do they have staff?

MORE QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Does the funding agency share your goals?
- Is the funding agency interested in the same populations?
- Has the funding agency funded projects similar to yours?
- Have they made awards to institutions similar to yours?
- Does the agency require matching?
- When will the award be made?

WRITING A GRANT IS LIKE PLAYING A GAME



YOU HAVE TO PLAY BY THE RULES

- **GET** the guidelines
- **READ** the guidelines
- **FOLLOW** the guidelines

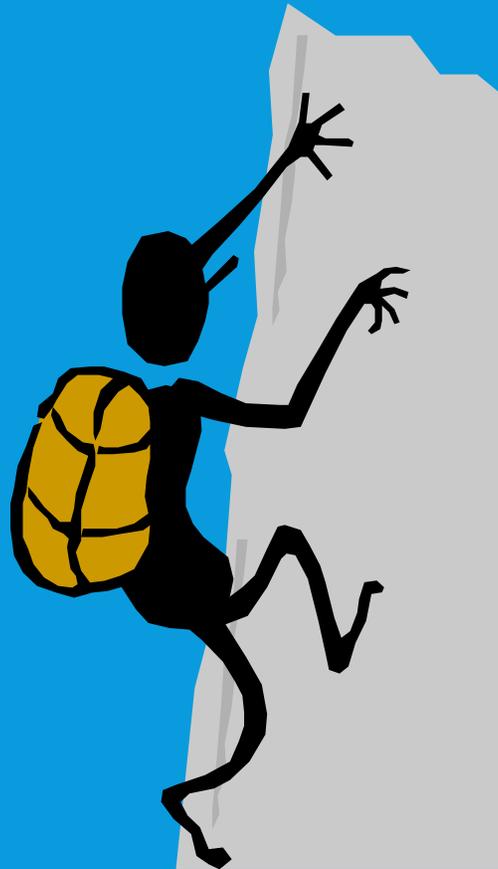
FOLLOWING THE GUIDELINES

- You must follow the guidelines **exactly**.
- Respond to all sections.
- Adhere to any format restrictions.
- Topics must be covered in order presented in guidelines.
- Use headings that correspond to the guidelines.

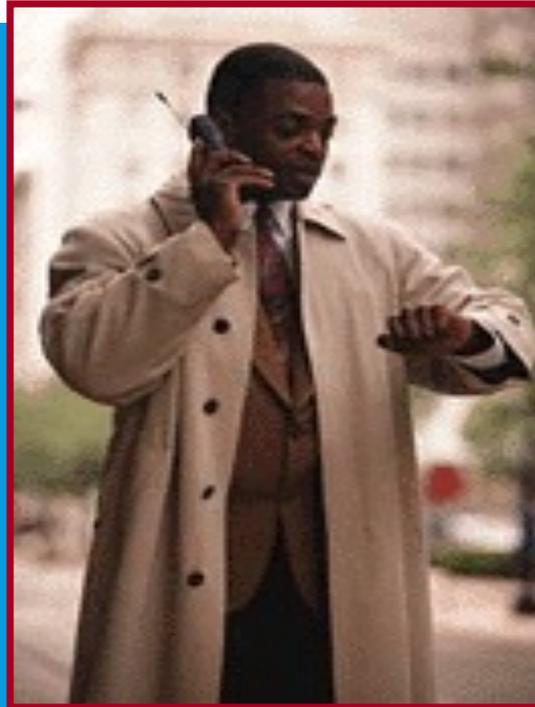
TYPES OF PROPOSALS

- Concept Paper
 - 2-4 pages
 - highlights
- Pre-proposal
 - 5 pages
 - reviewed
 - invited to submit full proposal
- Full Proposal
 - from 10-40 pages
 - forms
 - attachments
 - specific format
- Curriculum Proposal
 - clear task force
 - faculty involvement
 - advisory committee

THE NEXT STEP AFTER READING THE GUIDELINES

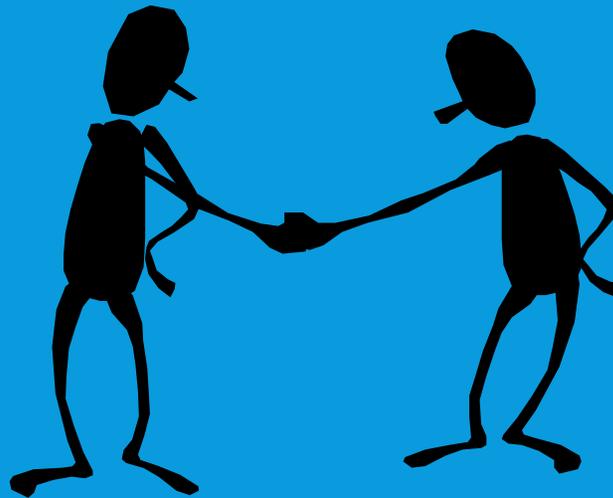


CALL THE PROGRAM OFFICER!



- ✓ A major variable in getting proposals funded is contact with the program officer prior to submission of a proposal.

THINGS TO CONSIDER



”

TECHNICAL ISSUES TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU WRITE

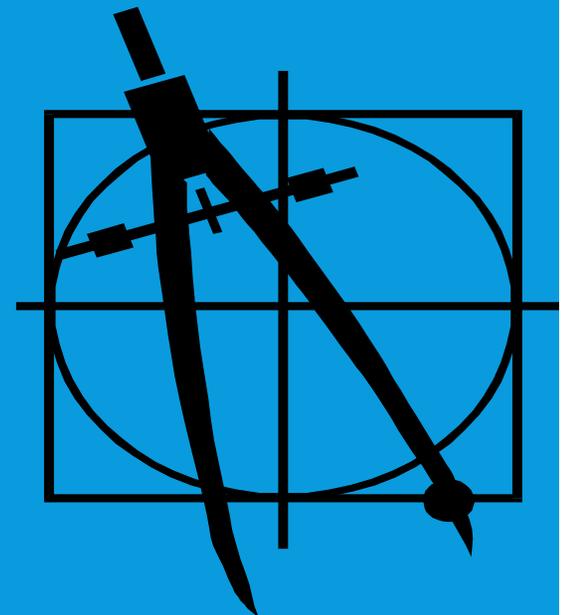
- Conflict of Interest?
- Human Subjects?
- Due date - received or postmarked
- Page limit
- Spacing
- Numbering
- Margin requirement
- Type requirement
- Do you need letters?
- Group Projects - Gant Chart

APPROPRIATE WRITING STYLE

- Write to the funding source
- Write in the correct language of the field - but no jargon
- **Never** write in 1st person
- Clarity
- 5 W's
- Write to inform
 - don't use language that is biased
- Write to persuade
 - data from reputable source
 - use current data
 - establish credibility
 - No unsubstantiated opinions

A PROPOSAL IS NOT
AN IDEA

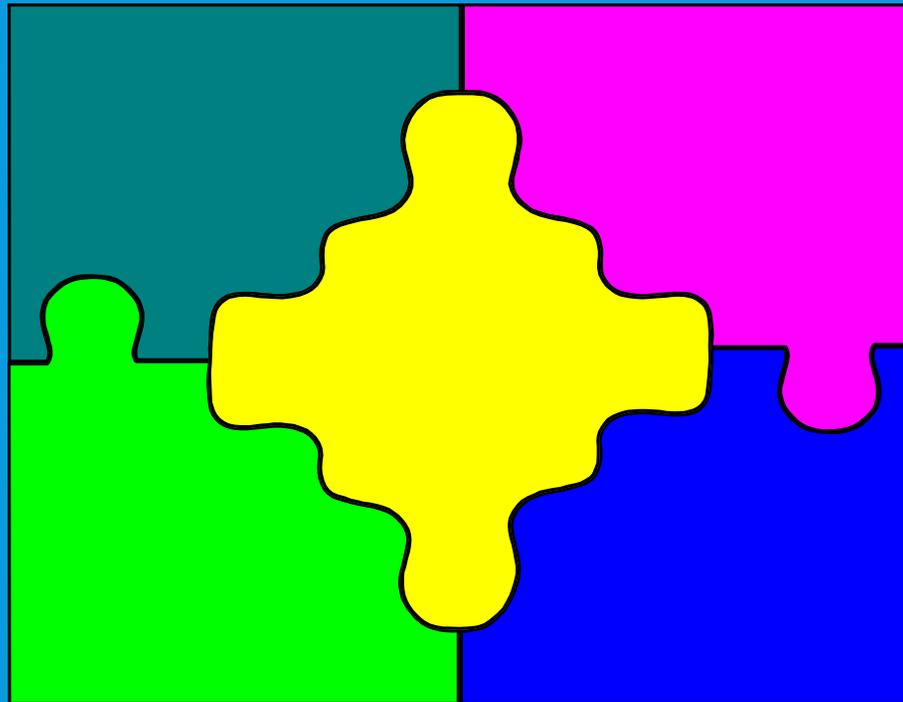
It is a Plan



PARTS OF A GRANT APPLICATION

- **Cover Page**
- **Table of Contents**
- Abstract
- Problem or Needs Statement
- Goals and Objectives
- Methodology
- Quality of Key Personnel
- Evaluation
- Dissemination
- References Cited
- **Budget & Narrative**
- Vitae
- Appendices
- **Forms, Certifications and Assurances**

PARTS OF A GRANT



THE TITLE

- The title is important
- It should convey what the project is about
- It is often used to assign review groups

TWO EXAMPLES

- *Aculturating Christianity: Christian Culture and Human Responsibility Imaged in the Humanities.*
- *Developing a Case Study Model for Interdisciplinary Humanities Curriculum in the Context of a Small Liberal Arts College.*

ABSTRACT

- Should be able to stand alone
 - it may be all the reviewers read
- Publishable quality
- Clear, concise, one page, single space
- Avoid 1st person
- Do not refer to proposal in the abstract
- Cover all key elements in order

THE NEEDS OR PROBLEM STATEMENT

THE TASK YOU FACE

- Critically important, and often poorly written
- Convince the funding source that you understand the need and can help them solve the problem
 - Prove the need
 - cite evidence
 - illustrate with graphs and charts
 - Demonstrate that the need is pressing
 - That the problem is an important problem to be solved
 - How your project will address the problem and what gaps will it fill

THE PROBLEM STATEMENT: FRAMING THE NEED

- Don't assume that no one else has ever thought of your idea.
- The **Problem Statement** establishes a framework for the project's goals, objectives, methods, and evaluation
- Provide a thorough explanation of your need
 - test assumptions
 - anticipate questions of others
 - incorporate proposal guidelines
- Begin with a framing statement then provide documentation

A GOOD PROBLEM STATEMENT SHOULD:

- Show that you understand the problem
- Demonstrate that this is an important problem to solve locally, but regionally and nationally as well
- Clearly describe the aspects of the problem that your project will address, and what gaps this will fill
- Describe the theoretical or conceptual basis for your project and your knowledge of the issues surrounding your proposed project
- Include statistical data, if appropriate
- Demonstrate that your approach is creative or innovative
- Describe how this project fits into the already existing goals of the organization

QUESTIONS TO ASK, THINGS TO KNOW

- What significant needs are you trying to meet?
- What is the current status of the needs?
- Will this project help meet the need?
- What really needs to be done?
- What services will be delivered? To whom? By whom?
- Is it possible to make some impact on the problem?
- What gaps exist in the knowledge base?
- What does the literature say about the significance of the problem, at a local, state, regional, national level?
- Is there evidence that this project will lead to other significant studies?
- What previous work has been done to meet this need? Was it effective?
- What will be the impact of this study?

EXAMPLE

"Children are exhibiting violent and disruptive behavior."

CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS



Improve this statement by:

- Children are exhibiting violent and disruptive behavior.

Clarifying the assumptions

Anticipating the questions

FUNDED PROBLEM STATEMENT

The harsh truth is that growing numbers of children in America are exhibiting violent and disruptive behavior or externalizing behavior (also referred to as antisocial behavior, challenging behavior, defiance, noncompliance, aggressive behavior, acting-out, etc.) beyond the occasional minor incident typical of most children during the normal course of development. Such behavior has become one of the most pressing issues in schools.

DISSECTING A PROBLEM STATEMENT

- ➔ The first sentence is the problem.
- ➔ Then clarify the problem by defining both the behavior and what is normal
- ➔ States that this is a pressing need
which is hopefully the need the funder is addressing

DOCUMENTING THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

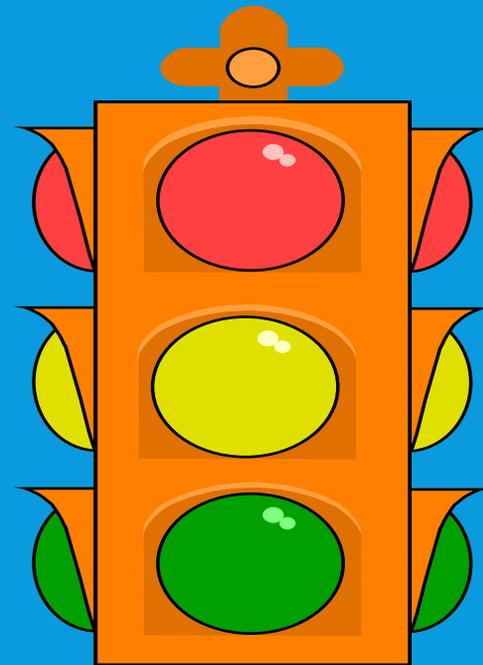
- Rooted in factual information
 - must document that your initial statement is correct.
- Show you know what's going on in the field, what the basic issues are
- Use national and local information
 - showing that the local problem is also a national one

DOCUMENTATION

- Cite current literature
 - 6-10 key references
 - 1-2 of works should be yours
- Key informants
- Case studies
- Statistics - objective
- Surveys
- Focus groups
- Use relevant graphs and charts

WORDS THAT PAINT A PICTURE

- "There is still not a single traffic light the length and breadth of Pend Oreille County. This is the other Pacific Northwest."



WHAT WAS USED TO PROVE NEED?

- **Statistics**

- #of students and teachers that are attacked each month
- #number who worry about safety
- #eligible for special services with higher department problems

- **References**

- Impact of behavior on individuals
- Post-school problems

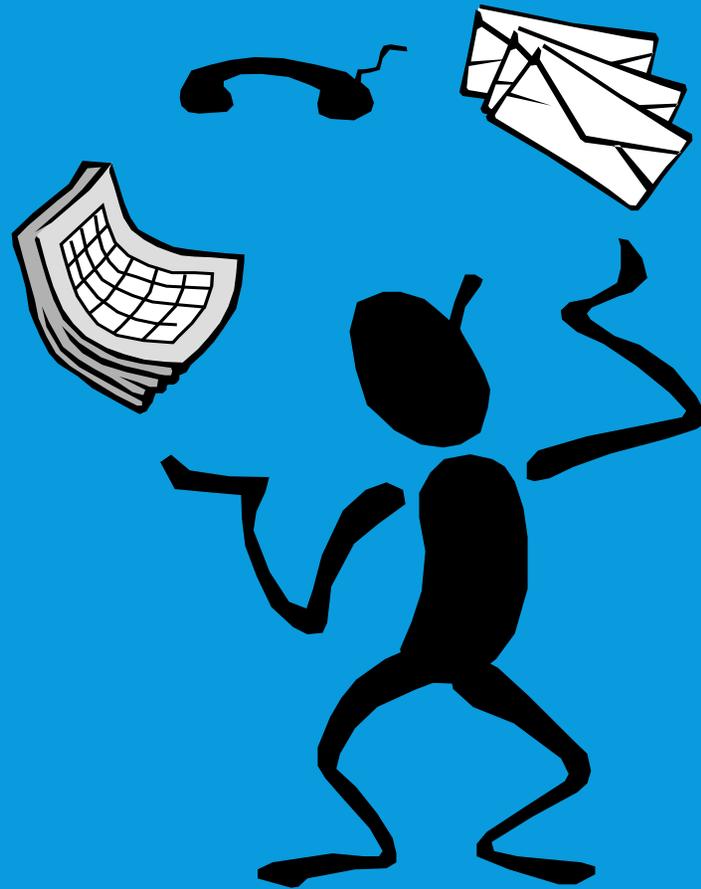
- **Charts**

- crime victimization
- weapons in schools
- fighting and other assaults
- feelings of safety
- increases in disruptive behavior over last 2 years in local schools

- **References**

- Impact of behavior on school environment
- What do key informants think?

HOW WOULD YOU DOCUMENT YOUR PROBLEM STATEMENT?



ORGANIZING AND WRITING THE NEEDS STATEMENT

- Go from the foundational statement
- Build your case with the data
- Follow the guidelines
- Follow the guidelines
- Be succinct and persuasive
- Tell your story and build your case drawing to a logical conclusion that leads into the project goals and objectives

ENDING A NEEDS STATEMENT

- Emphasize the significance of the project
 - what will be the result
 - what impact will it have
 - will the impact continue
- You might present you project as a model
- Always address the priorities of the funding agency
- Forecast the usefulness and importance of the results



The picture can't be displayed.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The "What"

APPROPRIOTIC (UH PRO PREE AH TICK): ADJ.

- Of or pertaining to the penchant to overuse the term "appropriate" in a proposal when the guidelines call for measurable objectives and outcomes and the principal investigator hasn't the foggiest idea what to do. It produces such sentences as: "the project director will take appropriate measures to seek appropriate levels of support for the delivery of appropriate services."

THE GOAL

- Both the goals and objectives should flow logically from the statement of need.
- Goals convey the ultimate intent of the proposed project, the overarching philosophy, **A CONCISE STATEMENT OF THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT.**
- The opening statement of this section should begin with **"the goal of this project is to..."**

A WELL THOUGHT-OUT PROJECT:

- Will have
 - one or two goals
 - several objectives related to the goals
 - many methodological steps to achieve each objective.

OBJECTIVES

- The objectives state the essence of the proposed work in terms of **what** will be accomplished.
- Break the goal down to specific measurable pieces, the outcomes of which can be measured to determine actual accomplishments.

OBJECTIVES

- Objectives discuss **who** is going to do **what**, **when** they will do it, and **how** it will be measured.
- Discuss desired end results of the project.
- But not how those results will be accomplished.
- They are action oriented and often begin with a verb.
- Arrange them in priority order.
- In a research proposal the objectives are the hypotheses, they are less specific, but reinforce that the project is conceptually sound.

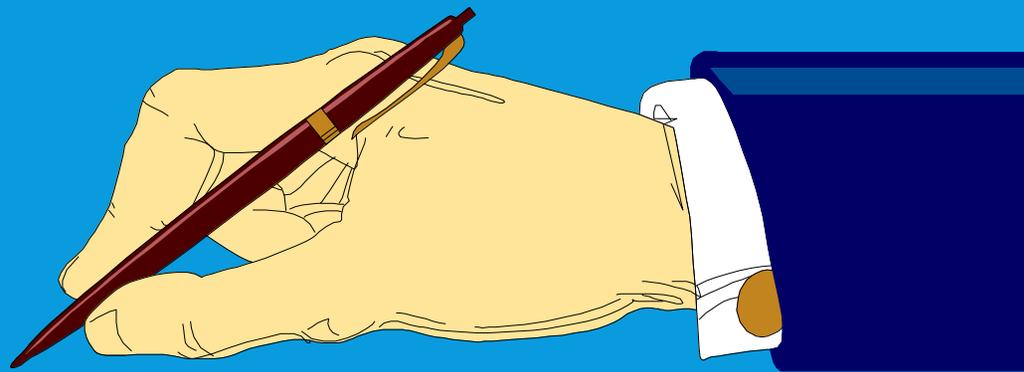
IS THIS AN OBJECTIVE?

- If our goal is getting people from Indiana and Kentucky to interact to improve the economy. (goal).
- To construct a bridge over the Ohio River.
- "To improve trade (what) within five years (when) between residents of southern Indiana and northern Kentucky (who) as measured by each state's economic development indicators related to interstate commerce (measure)."

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- Generation of new knowledge
- Hypothesis or research questions
- generally short
- Example:
 - determine the impact of sheep ranching on the wild puma population in Peru
 - identify the needs of the farmers in preventing loss of sheep due to puma predation
 - formulate ranching guidelines to meet the needs of the farmer and the wild puma

WRITING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES



SMART GOALS

Specific



Measurable



Attainable



Relevant



Time-based



METHODOLOGY: THE "HOW"



PLAN OF ACTION, PROJECT DESIGN, OR METHODOLOGY

- Usually, this is the area allotted the most points.
- Often poorly written or missing altogether.
- 2:5 proposals are turned down because the methodology is unsound.



METHODOLOGY, PROJECT DESIGN, PLAN OF ACTION

- Often the most detailed and lengthy section
- What specific activities will allow you to meet your objectives
- Task oriented, specific, detailed
- Essential that you demonstrate all the steps necessary to complete project with each flowing logically from the previous to the next.

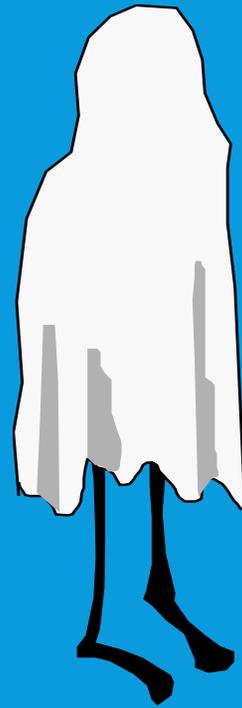
QUESTIONS FOR METHODOLOGY

- Walk the reader through your project
- Describe the activities as they relate to the objectives
- Develop a time line and/or and organizational chart
- How will the activities be conducted?
- When?
- How long?
- Who?
- Where?
- What facilities?

METHODOLOGY IN A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

- If methodology is new or unique explain why it is better than that previously used
- Specify research design and why it was chosen.
- Include descriptions of variables and their relationships.
- Define all important terms
- Provide descriptions of data sources including subjects, how they will be selected, the size of subject pool, and the size of the sample.
- Describe all procedures
- Include pilot instruments and data when possible
- Step-by-step work plan

QUALITY OF KEY PERSONNEL



WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE, AND WHY SHOULD WE GIVE THEM OUR MONEY?

- This is where you demonstrate that you are the right person to do this project.
- Do not simply say "See resume."
- Convince the funding agency that you are capable of accomplishing what you say you can accomplish
- Highlight the expertise of all key personnel
- Include experience you have had managing other projects
- Weak qualifications or inexperience in some cases can be compensated for by adding appropriate consultants. Include why you need consultants and how you chose them.
- If you don't identify a person, summarize the job description or qualifications required and how you will find that person
- Indicate responsibilities of all, and level of effort.

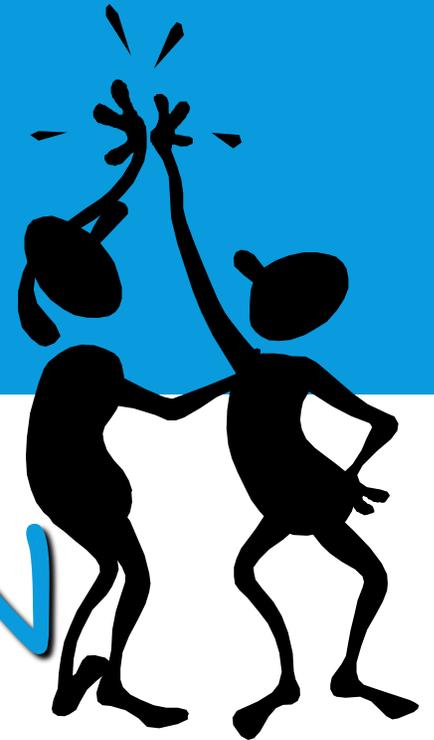
IN KEY PERSONNEL SECTION ADDRESS...

- Publications in the area of the proposal or related areas.
- Evidence of relevant training, certification, or clearance.
- Unpublished papers, conference presentations in the area.

INSTITUTION'S QUALIFICATIONS

- Why should the award be made to your institution?
- If your institution has a Grants Office they will help you with the information in this section.
- Highlight institution's capabilities, relation of the project to mission.
- Facilities, support, library, computer, etc.

EVALUATION



Did it go up or down?

Were they happy?

EVALUATION

- Formative evaluation of objectives
 - how the project will be evaluated as it progresses
- Summative evaluation of objectives
 - how the project will be evaluated when it is finished

EVALUATION DESIGN

- Explanation of the methods.
- What was the impact?
- Descriptions of record keeping, surveys, and assessment instruments.
- Consider what would count as evidence that your project succeeded or failed?
- If you were someone else who wanted to replicate the project what would you need to know to determine if you would benefit
- What form should that information take to be sufficiently credible or useful?

EVALUATION DESIGN - QUESTIONS TO ASK

- Evaluation for Faculty Development Workshops

- Formative

- Who participated?
- Were they organized and staffed as planned?
- Were materials available?
- Were they of high quality?
- Was the full range of topics actually covered?
- Too few, too many?
- Problems?
- Modification?
- Timing?

- Summative

- Did faculty change their instructional practices?
- Did this vary by teacher or student characteristics?
- Did faculty use information?
- What obstacles prevented implementing change?
- Were changes made in the curriculum?
- Were students more interested in class work?

OUTSIDE EVALUATION

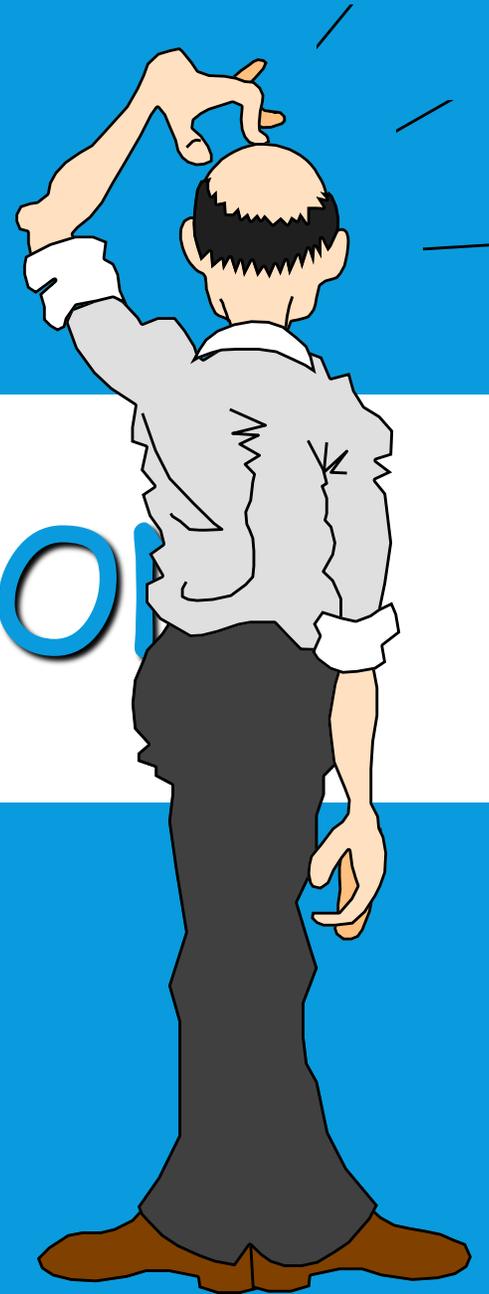
- Hire a third party.
- Someone well known in the field.
- Someone you quoted in the needs section.
- Identify evaluators before submitting proposal and include their resume and a letter of commitment.
- They may often contribute to the writing of the evaluation section.

A GOOD EVALUATION PLAN:

- Covers both process and product
- Tells who will perform the evaluation and how they were chosen
- Defines the criteria by which the program will be evaluated
- Evaluates the achievement of each objective
- Describes data gathering methods
- Explains assessment instruments, questionnaires, and other materials
- Describes data analysis procedures
- Relates evaluation findings to a plan for program improvement
- Describes evaluation reports to be produced

CONTINUATION

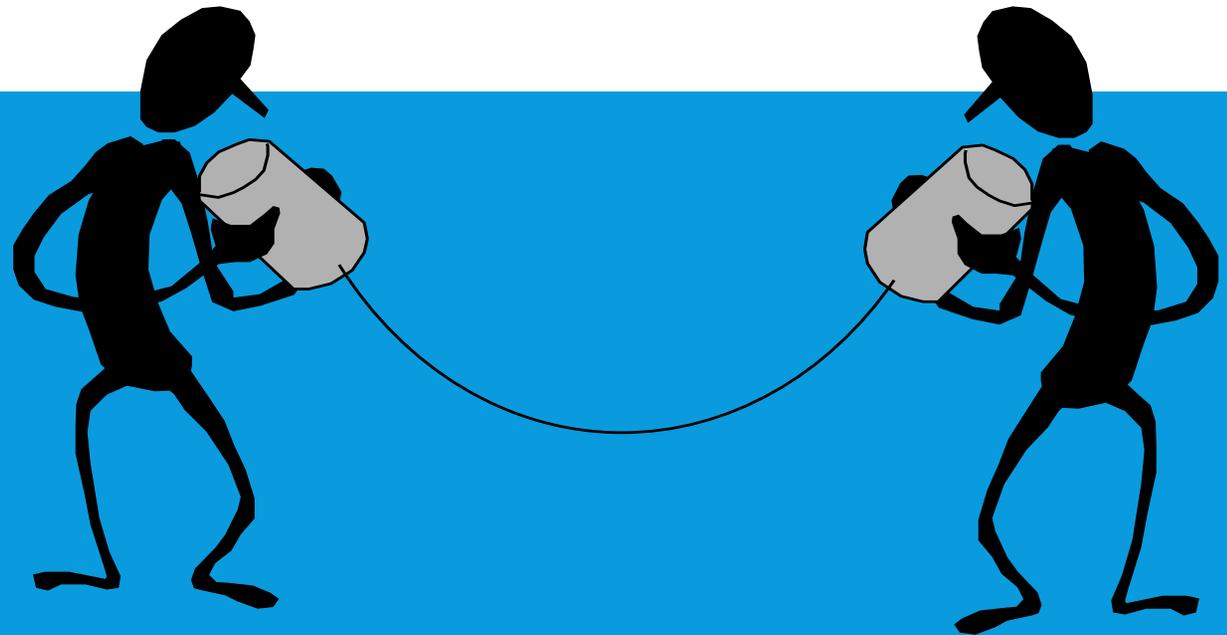
What happens when the
money runs out?



PROJECT CONTINUATION

- Funding agencies want to have a lasting impact and they want to know how that will happen.
- Include how you propose to continue the project beyond the funding that you are requesting -
- May include a 'good faith' statement from the institution
- Demonstrate Continuation with budget construction.
- How will this project become part of an established program?
- Will it generate fees to sustain it?
- Will it become part of the institutional budget?
- Is it part of an on-going research endeavor?

DISSEMINATION



DISSEMINATION

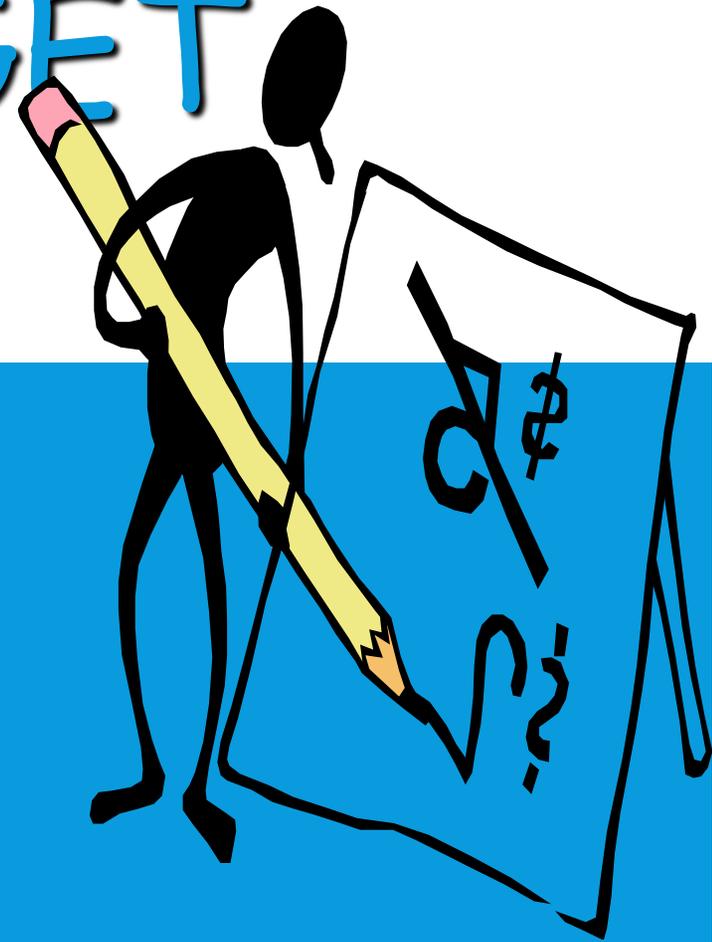
- Process by which your project is reported to other professionals and the public.
- Important to the funding agency.
- Sometimes presented as the concluding thoughts of the project plan.
- How will you make the research results available to others?
- Will there be workshops, publications, or conferences?
- If you are producing materials how will they be advertised, marketed, and distributed?
- Websites

DISSEMINATION PLAN SHOULD INCLUDE:

- Which results will be reported?
- What audiences will be reached?
- How the results or products will be disseminated, e.g., computer networks, video tapes, conferences, professional journals, or publication of books, chapters, or monographs?

THE BUDGET

Do the Math!



DEVELOPING YOUR BUDGET

- Your agency must be involved in this portion of proposal development.
- A restatement in dollar terms of the methods section - no surprises
- Realistic, don't inflate
- Two parts to a budget
 - the budget form which breaks the budget into specific categories
 - a budget narrative that explains how you arrived at these figures and why you need the money

TWO TYPES OF COSTS

Direct and Indirect

DIRECT COSTS

- Costs that can be identified specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity; or that can be directly assigned to such activities relatively easily with a high degree of accuracy.

INDIRECT OR FACILITIES AND ADMINISTRATIVE (F&A) COSTS

- Costs that are incurred for common or joint objectives, and, therefore, cannot be identified readily and specifically with a particular sponsored project, an instructional activity, or any other institutional activity.
- Indirect Rate is negotiated with Cognizant Auditing Agency

COST SHARE OR MATCH

- Funders like to see that the institution is putting funds into a project as well.
- **Match** - A 50% match for a \$100,000 grant is \$50,000
- A 50% **Cost Share** of the total project cost where the funder puts up \$100,000 is \$100,000 because it is 50% of \$200,000.

HOW DO WE DETERMINE IF A COST IS ALLOWABLE?

- Only required for federal, but most institutions apply to all sponsored projects.
- **REASONABLE:** A prudent business person would have purchased this item and paid this price
- **ALLOCABLE:** Assigned to the activity on a reasonable basis
- **CONSISTENTLY TREATED:** like costs must be treated or costed the same in like circumstances

CATEGORIES OF A BUDGET

- Salaries
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Materials & Supplies
- Equipment
- Contractual
- Other
- Total Direct Costs
- + Indirect Cost Rate
35% of Salaries
- Total Federal Share
- + Cost Sharing
- Total Project Cost

OTHER POSSIBLE SECTIONS

- References or Literature Cited
 - use standard format
- Facilities
 - don't use boiler plate - what is available for your project
 - show you have access to what you need

ADEQUACY OF RESOURCES

- Review your budget objectively
- Have you requested enough funding to complete the project professionally
- Target your budget to the “average” award range indicated by the agency
- You may need to demonstrate that the institution has adequate facilities to do the project as well.

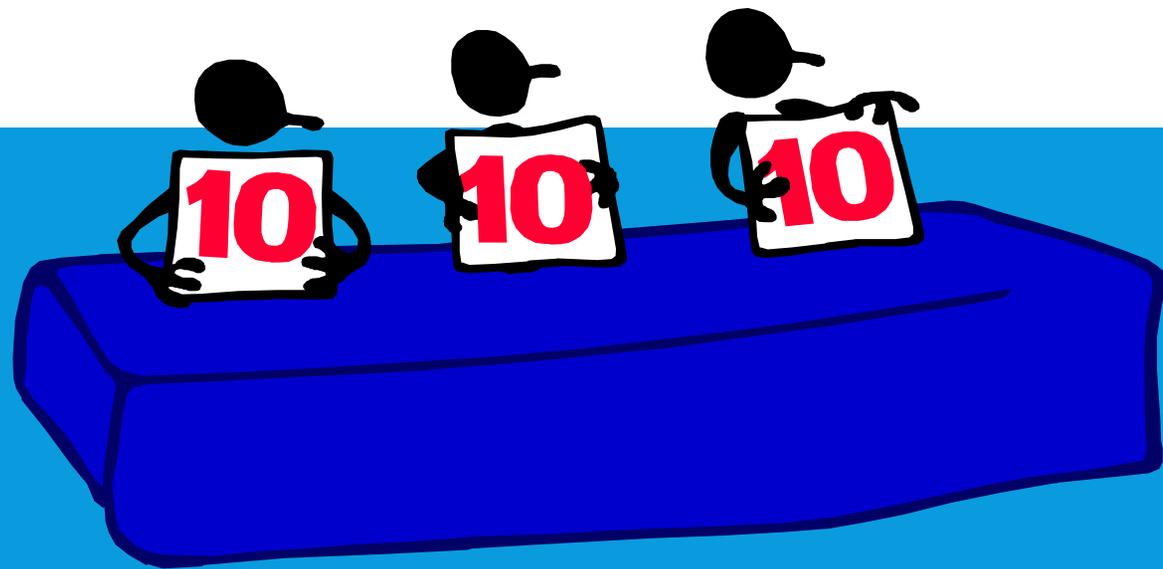
APPENDIX

- What additional information will be helpful to the reader?
- Vitae
- Letters of Support/Commitment (Grants Office will obtain any institutional letters)
- Sample questionnaires, syllabi
- Some sponsors either do not allow appendix material or do not require reviewers to read anything that appears in an appendix
- Don't waste trees

LETTERS

- **Letters of Support**
 - We think it's a good idea
 - referred to in text, put in appendix
 - how does project fit with mission/goals of college
 - Presents type of support
- **Letters of Commitment**
 - Evidence of interest in project from participants
 - if project is funded they are ready with their contribution
 - what they will contribute
 - they will participate at the time that you need them

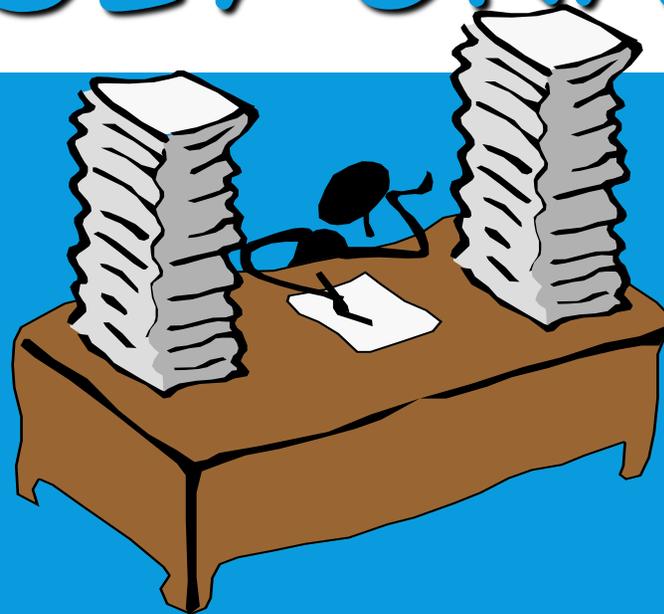
REVIEW CRITERIA



REVIEW

- Application Guidelines contain review criteria
- Peer Reviewed
- Panel Review
- Staff Review
- Board Review
- It is OK to ask them not to send a proposal to a particular person
- It is OK to recommend reviewers
- If points are assigned to sections, one weak section may limit the chances of an otherwise strong proposal.

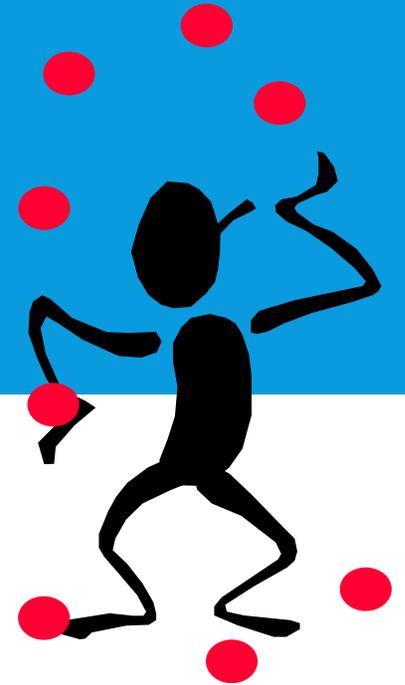
A REVIEWER FRIENDLY GRANT



A READABLE STYLE

- Scannability
- Make sure that all pages are not just solid text
- Use bulleted items
- Use graphics in methodology and needs sections
- Use headings and subheadings, bold and underline, no italics
- Look at each introductory sentence of a paragraph, it is the most important part, it is all they may read
- Use type faces with serifs, like Times, they are easier to read
- Do not justify

EDITING



The fine balance between wordiness and brevity that equals clarity

EDITING YOUR PROPOSAL

- After you have finished your draft:
 - set it aside for a day
 - revise
- Have someone else read it without taking notes
- Have them tell you what your project is about
- Edit for clarity and conciseness
- No jargon
- No first person

WRITING IN PLAIN ENGLISH

- Grant Writing is a form of technical writing
- Put sentences in logical sequence
- Use action verbs
- Never write in first person
- Use lists when you have several items
- Use the active voice
 - avoid "to be"
 - subject first
- Use parallel construction
- Avoid noun strings
- Go on a "which" hunt
- Avoid openers with There is, There are, and It is - try "ing"

PAGE LIMITS

- Can you go beyond them?

- **NO!!!**

THE FINAL DOCUMENT

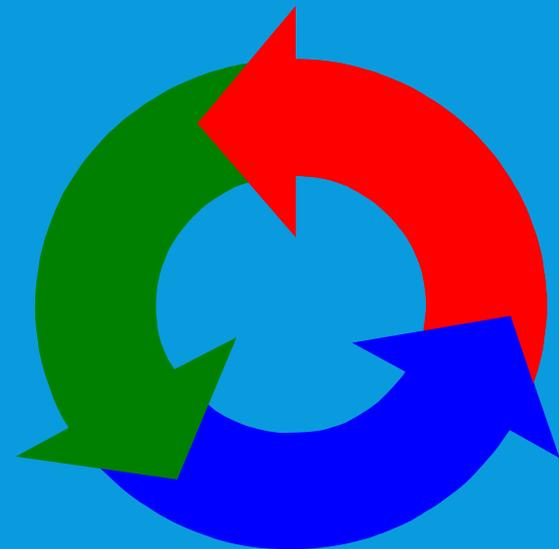
- Readable, neat, easy to handle
- Avoid fancy covers or a slick appearance
- Be sure sections are easily identifiable and table of contents is accurate
- Required number of copies
- Necessary signatures in blue ink

14 REASONS WHY PROPOSALS FAIL

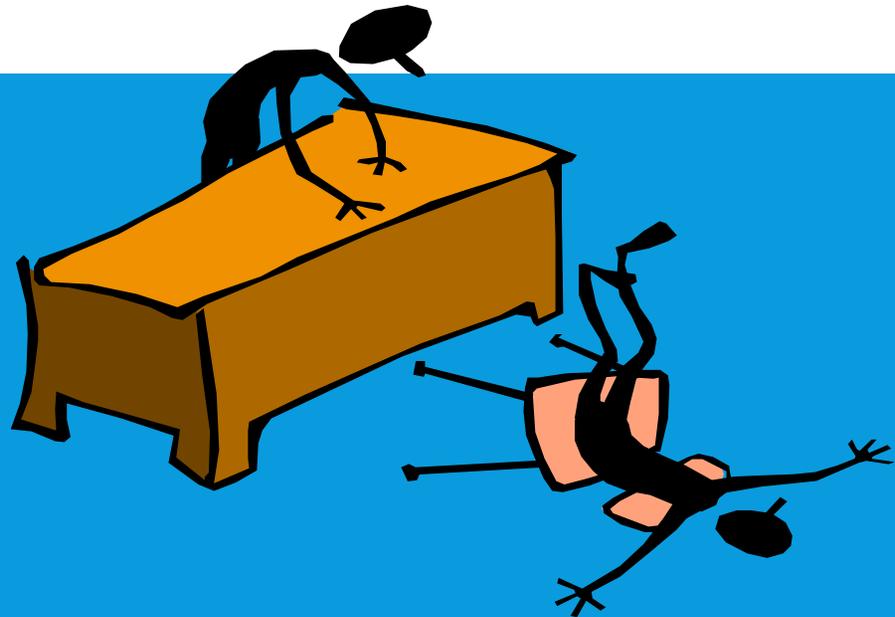
- Deadline not met
- Guidelines not followed
- Nothing intriguing
- Did not meet priorities
- Not complete
- Poor literature review
- Appeared beyond capacity of PI
- Methodology weak
- Unrealistic budget
- Cost greater than benefit
- Highly partisan
- Poorly written
- Mechanical defects

RECYCLE YOUR REJECTED PROPOSAL

- Success means having one in three grants funded
- A rejected proposal does not always mean the idea was rejected
- Obtain reviewer comments
- Call the program officer
- Rewrite, revise, resubmit



THE FATAL MISTAKE



THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF ALL

- Is to not write a proposal. It is absolutely fatal.
- So - Go ahead and "Buy a Ticket!"

THE END

