

Grant Writing Best Practices



Will Wheeler

U.S. EPA, National Center for Environmental Economics

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Background



- I've been working in grants for my whole career at EPA (10+ years)
 - Reviewer, project officer (full and part time)
- I have to be careful about giving individual advice, so I will stick to EPA FAQ-level information
 - Please don't ask me about the open NCER RFA on water quality benefits
- The process is competitive but it's also a learned skill
 - Some people are very good at it
- It's worth it

Advice



- One piece of advice I've heard that I particularly like: don't annoy those who will read your grant
 - Put yourself in their shoes
 - Time is valuable (reviewers may have to read 25 or more proposals)
 - If you can't follow the instructions, can you follow your research protocol?
- Two main points that encompass most fixable issues:
 - Read and understand instructions/process
 - Give yourself enough time to finish process

Success Rates



- Grants are very competitive
 - EPA (economics) research: 15-20 percent of applications, 50 percent of those that pass peer review
 - NSF: about 25 percent for SBE
- Success rates are NOT sliding scales wrt effort, they are step functions! Make good use of your time
 - You have to put in a certain amount of effort to have a shot

Sources of Funding



- Searched through articles published in JEEM 2011
- Numerous funding sources:
 - University Institutes/Centers
 - EPA, NSF, USDA (including Hatch/Experiment Station)
 - Sea Grant
 - Foundations
 - Many international
- All of these sources have different rules, which leads me to one of my main tips:
 - **Read the instructions (next page)**

Read RFP and Instructions



- Read instructions carefully, read them again, follow them closely
- Knowing the OMB format may help
 - Not user-friendly, but you get used to it
- Do you have any questions?
 - Look up agency FAQs
 - Contact Project Officers
 - Don't wait until the last minute
- Understand the review process
 - Criteria (expertise, experience, past performance)
 - Steps in process
 - Panel review then Project Officer decision is common
 - EPA has two panels, requires “pollution”

Timeliness



- Not leaving enough time is a very common mistake
- There are lots of steps in the process
- Grants.gov
- Sponsored Programs

I hope I didn't scare you



- GOOD LUCK!