Grant Writing Tips, Tricks, and What you need to know before and after you submit your proposal

Janet Hurley-
Extension Program Specialist II - School IPM

Tribbie Sandner-
Program Manager- Research Administration Liaison
## A brief history

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Funding Agency</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>When Applied</th>
<th>When Funded</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>US EPA</td>
<td>Regional TRC</td>
<td>3/23/2001</td>
<td>1-May-01</td>
<td>$100,000.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US EPA Environ Ed</td>
<td>IPM Cost - Benefit</td>
<td>11/15/2001</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDA - IPM Grant</td>
<td>IPM Manual &amp; Training</td>
<td>11/10/2002</td>
<td>Apr-02</td>
<td>$14,992.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFPME</td>
<td>Interactive IPM Assist</td>
<td>5/8/2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA Region 6</td>
<td>Interactive IPM Assist</td>
<td>5/22/2002</td>
<td>Sep-02</td>
<td>$38,004.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA CSRES</td>
<td>IPM Cost - Benefit</td>
<td>10/30/2002</td>
<td>Dec-02</td>
<td>$29,258.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFPME</td>
<td>Interactive IPM Assist</td>
<td>1/7/2003</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA Region 6</td>
<td>Marketing IPM</td>
<td>5/16/2003</td>
<td>7/16/2003</td>
<td>$10,938.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA CSRES</td>
<td>IPM Cost Training</td>
<td>10/29/2003</td>
<td>9/1/2004</td>
<td>$40,221.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NFPME</td>
<td>Model IPM for Hospitals</td>
<td>12/30/2003</td>
<td>6/1/2004</td>
<td>$31,388.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6 EPA</td>
<td>ABC's on DVD</td>
<td>1/6/2004</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDA - IPM Grant</td>
<td>Marketing IPM</td>
<td>1/14/2005</td>
<td>2/24/2005</td>
<td>$9,764.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA/CREES/IPM Initiative</td>
<td>Reducing fire ants nurse</td>
<td>4/7/2005</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARMAC</td>
<td>RIFA in Nursing Homes</td>
<td>8/1/2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FARMAC</td>
<td>RIFA in Nursing Homes</td>
<td>8/1/2005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA RGI</td>
<td>Hazard cleanup</td>
<td>2/24/2006</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA SRIPM</td>
<td>Multistate cost calculator</td>
<td>12/5/2006</td>
<td></td>
<td>$82,254.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sygenta</td>
<td>IPM Symposium</td>
<td>3/5/2007</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA - EIPM</td>
<td>Marketing IPM as Green School Technology for Soutehrn States</td>
<td>7/12/2007</td>
<td></td>
<td>$9,844.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6 EPA</td>
<td>IPM Symposium host and professional assoc.</td>
<td>3/17/2008</td>
<td></td>
<td>$50,337.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region 6 EPA</td>
<td>facilitating face to face meeting</td>
<td>7/13/2010</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR IPM Center - Enhancement</td>
<td>School IPM cost calculator expansion and marketing</td>
<td>1/18/2011</td>
<td></td>
<td>$24,978.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA/CARE with city of new orleans</td>
<td>reduction of pesticides in Orleans schools</td>
<td>3/22/2011</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA HQ school IPM grant</td>
<td>A Low-cost, Standardized IPM Curriculum for the Nation's Public Schools: A Southern Region Partnership</td>
<td>7/18/2011</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td>$249,952.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPA HQ school IPM grant</td>
<td>Implementing Verifiable school IPM in New Orleans</td>
<td>7/18/2011</td>
<td>4/1/2012</td>
<td>$113,570.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA/NIFA</td>
<td>People's Garden Project DFW</td>
<td>8/23/2011</td>
<td>Declined</td>
<td>$119,047.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USDA/NIFA SRIPM</td>
<td>Evaluation of the IPM-SPA Calculator - comparing schools and costs in the U.S.</td>
<td>5/20/2013</td>
<td>declined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SR IPM Center - Enhancement</td>
<td>A Low-cost, IPM Curriculum for the Public Schools and Municipalities</td>
<td>3/20/2013</td>
<td>6/1/2013</td>
<td>$29,996.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US EPA HQ - School IPM</td>
<td>iSchool Pest Manager Project – School IPM Enhancement Program,</td>
<td>7/29/2013</td>
<td>7/30/2014</td>
<td>$1,292,609.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $1,292,609.00
Goals of Today’s Workshop

- Understanding the importance what the sponsor wants
- Understanding how to convey your idea to the sponsor
- Understanding what happens when you get the award.
- Understanding how compliance can affect your project
The Basics
Definition of Sponsored Projects

- Sponsored Projects are externally-funded activities in which a formal written agreement, i.e., a grant, contract, or cooperative agreement, is entered into by Texas A&M AgriLife and by the sponsor.
- A sponsored project may be thought of as a transaction in which there is a specified statement of work with a related, reciprocal transfer of something of value.
Solicitations- Guidelines

- Types:
  - RFP - Request for Proposals
  - RFA - Request for Applications
  - NOA - Notice of Applications
  - NFO - Notice of Funding Opportunity
  - FOA - Funding Opportunity Announcement
  - PA - Program Announcement
  - Unsolicited
Grant v. Contract v. Cooperative Agreement

**Grant**- Financial assistance mechanism providing money, property, or both to an eligible entity to carry out an approved project or activity.

**Contract**- An award instrument used to acquire from a non-federal party, by purchase, lease, or barter, property or services for the direct benefit or use of the Federal government.

**Cooperative Agreement**- A support mechanism used when there will be substantial Federal scientific or programmatic involvement. Substantial involvement means that, after award, scientific or program staff will assist, guide, coordinate, or participate in project activities.
Understanding the Solicitation

- **DUE DATE!!!**
- Focus Area
- Submission Method
- Page Limitation
- Sections of Proposal
- Formatting
- Sponsored Required Forms
- Budget Limitations
Understanding the Sponsor

• All sponsors have a mission or missions:
  • Government agencies have a mission defined by their leadership or legislative mandates.
  • Private foundations have missions defined by their charter or the source of their funds.
  • Private companies have a need to improve their company and be more profitable for their owners/shareholders.

• Identify both your idea/research problem and your proposed solution/research plan

• Know as precisely as possible what the funder wants to fund, what they do not want to fund, and what they’ve funded in the past

• Write your proposal in a manner that makes your proposed work’s relationship to that mission as obvious as possible

• Make the above points the primary aims of your proposal writing process
Now, let's Write........
What is a Good Proposal Idea?

- Is it what you want to study?
- Is it what a funding agency will fund?

- The best proposals are able to answer both these questions with yes. The critical skills needed to build a bridge between these two sometimes not wholly compatible priorities is to find a reasonable compromise between the current emphasis of your research/scholarly agenda and the stated mission(s) of your targeted funding agency.
Keys to Successful Proposal Writing

• Clearly identify your or a problem for your proposed project

• Identify the significance of your problem or endeavor, (answering the “so what? question)

• Describe the efficacy of your strategy to address the problem
Keys to Successful Proposal Writing

• Identify the expected outcomes, and

• Identify the impact of the successful project

• Demonstrate your expertise as it relates to the proposed project

• Effective communication through solid proposal writing skills
Current Challenges to Successful Proposal Writing

• Flat funding budgets
• Increasing numbers of proposals submitted
  – Increased competition for diminishing resources
  – Decreasing hit rates
  – Tighter restrictions on how funds may be spent
Now That You Have a Good Idea...

• Is it significant in your field?
  – Become as conversant in this aspect of your field as it impacts your proposed idea as you can be from the literature and your previous work.
  – Learn from the funded approaches investigators have followed in the past. Determine precisely what has been funded before and by whom.

• Is it new?
  – Is this approach to the area of inquiry in your field original?
  – Will it stand apart from other approaches?
How Can Your Original Idea Be Improved Before Submission?

• Run your idea and your approach by colleagues **within** your discipline and get their input.
  • Be open to their ideas
  • Look for opportunities to create investigative collaborations, both within your discipline and across related disciplines.
  • Use the feedback you get and the partnerships you form (if you do) to further refine both your idea and your approach.
How Can Your Original Idea Be Improved Before Submission?

- Have a colleague or colleagues outside your area of specialization read your proposal and offer feedback on readability and comprehensibility from their perspective.
  - Readability
  - Comprehensibility
  - Effective communication
Make sure they understand your idea
Keys to Effective Communication

• To whom am I trying to communicate?
  • Program Manager or officer
  • Program or foundation reviewer or review panel

• What is the goal of my communication strategy and style?
  • To be funded
Effective Proposal Communication

• Write to be understood by your reviewer.
  • The odds are very good that your reviewer will not be an expert in your field/area of specialization
  • While the reviewer of most federal & state agency proposals will be experienced in at least a field related to yours, your reviewer may not be familiar with your field of endeavor or discipline at all (foundation grants).
Goals and Strategies in the Proposal

• How you propose to accomplish your study is just as important as what you propose to accomplish!
  • Are your investigative methods based upon a thorough search of the literature?
  • Have you received feedback from your colleagues on your method as well as your idea(s)?
  • Have you done preliminary studies or collected preliminary data?
It’s all about the Money
Budget, Budget, Budget...

- Is the budget you have requested appropriate to successfully complete the study?
  - Proposal reviewers will have a good idea of what the work you are proposing will cost.
  - A budget that is too small will cause reviewers to wonder if the project can be successfully completed.
  - Budgets that appear padded or in excess of reasonable requirements to complete the project call into question the proposal writer’s expertise.
- Is funding necessary to the project at all?
Budget, Budget, Budget...

• Does the RFP limit the funds?
• Does the sponsor require items for the budget?
• Do you need in-kind or match?
• What is F&A or indirect cost?
• How long is your project?
Evaluation

• Evaluation of your proposed work is (depending on discipline) a critical aspect of the project.
  – Write a clear, well researched evaluation plan that matches the requirements of the RFA or RFP.
  – Do not hesitate to collaborate with a colleague who has significant experience in formative and summative evaluation of similar work.
  – If general evaluation is to be accomplished by conference presentations, or through articles published in specific journals, use a line or two to explain this and give specific examples.
Finally……

• Write to the match the RFA/RFP, the mission of the program, and your strengths/experience
• Communicate effectively to your reader
• Be original, not incremental
• Write a solid evaluation plan and reasonable budget
• Tap into expertise of colleagues both within and outside your discipline for feedback
• Develop relationships with Program Officers/Managers
Research Compliance....... How does it affect you?
Does your Project Involve?

- Animals (On-Campus)
- Animals (Off-Campus)
- Biohazards
- Human Subjects
- Export Controls
- Biosafety
- Financial Conflicts of Interest
Sponsored Project Compliance- AgriLife

**Michael McCasland;** Assistant Director for Risk and Compliance, CPA  
m-mccasland@tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-845-7879

**Johnny Fazzino;** Assistant Director for Risk and Compliance  
j-fazzino@tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-845-7879

**Alyce Ghedi;** Risk and Compliance Coordinator  
Research Compliance (Animals, Biosafety, Humans)  
anghedi@ag.tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-862-6307

**Bill Gray;** Risk and Compliance Coordinator  
Research Compliance (Animals, Biosafety, Humans)  
wgray@ag.tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-845-9281

**Bob Hensz;** Risk and Compliance Manager  
Export Controls, International Travel  
r-hensz@tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-845-4766

**Tribbie Sandner;** Program Manager- Research Administration Liaison  
Financial Conflict of Interest, Maestro Help  
tdsandner@ag.tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-458-4383

**Lauren Schroeder;** Risk and Compliance Coordinator  
Export Controls, International Travel  
clschroeder@ag.tamu.edu  |  Phone: 979-458-3289
Questions?