**BEFORE YOU WRITE**

Developing Ideas for a Proposal

When developing an idea for a proposal, it is important to determine if it aligns with institutional characteristics, strategic plan goals, and that it has been vetted with your department chair, dean, or immediate supervisor. If efforts are unique and a need has been established, it may be worthwhile to pursue Federal assistance.

Finding Funding

A successful grant proposal is one that is well-prepared, thoughtfully planned, and concisely packaged. Thoughtful planning begins with identification of funding agencies. There are several types of funding agencies:

1. Government (Federal, State, City/Municipal) examples:
   1. U.S. Department of Education (federal)
   2. University System of Georgia Affordable Learning Textbook (state)
2. Non-Government- (Foundations/Private corporations). ￼
   1. Walmart Foundation
   2. Chick-Fil-A Foundation

Solicitations from private corporations must receive prior approval from University Advancement to confirm pre-existing targeted grant supports. There are also…

3. Foundation/Private corporations—a type of non-government grant as identified in number 2 above.

4. University System of Georgia Grants—the Affordable Learning Textbook (state) grant is a type of system sponsored grant *as identified in number 1 above*.

5. Clayton State University Internal Grants—certain grant funding can also be sponsored by the institution from the Office of the Provost.

**WRITING THE PROPOSAL**

Following Funding Agency Guidelines

Whether submitting a hardcopy of your proposal or a digital (e-grant) version, always follow the funder’s instructions:

1. Read the guidelines three times: one time to understand the general instructions, a second time to focus on the technical formatting requirements, and a third time to note the narrative content requirements.
2. Highlight all technical and content requirements.
3. Call the funder (or ask Sponsored Research and Programs for assistance) to clarify and conflicting instructions.
4. Write in chronological order (the same order that the funder asks for the information in its guidelines).

Gathering Background Information

The first thing you will need to do in writing your proposal is to gather the documentation for it. You will require background documentation in three areas: concept, program, and expenses (Expenses will be addressed in the section on developing a budget).

1. Concept—it is important that you have a good sense of how the project fits with the philosophy and mission of the agency.
2. Program—Developing a program is at the heart of proposal development. Here is a check list of the program information typically required:
   1. Cover Materials—a cover letter, pre-narrative forms, abstract or executive summary, and table of contents
   2. Organization History and Capability—History of the organization; major accomplishments relevant to the proposed grant-funded project; current programs and activities relevant to the proposed grant-funded project; target population demographics that mirror the types of populations the funder wants to support in its current funding cycle; collaborations with local, regional, and statewide nonprofit and for-profit –partners
   3. Statement of Need—The problem within the community in critical need of grant funding; how you identified the problem; how the problem looks from national, regional, and local perspectives; the current national and local research that proves the existence of the problem; and the gloom doom, drama, and trauma that justifies the need for grant funds.
   4. Program Design—one concise statement expressing the purpose of the program; goals that shadow the funder’s specific funding-goals; SMART or outcome objectives written in quantifiable terms: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime-bound commitments to show the steps to achieving the goals; process objectives; impact objectives expressed in terms of their benefits to end recipients; the time frame for starting and ending all proposed activities; integration of the evaluation plan into the overall program design or plan of operation; a dissemination plan; and a sustainability plan.
   5. Evaluation and Dissemination—If the funder requires you to submit a separate evaluation section with your application, make sure to address the following:
      1. The methods you will use to evaluate the progress of your objectives, and
      2. How you plan to share or disseminate your findings with others.
         * Evaluation plan—An especially important part of a project is a well-designed plan for evaluation. All funding agencies stress the importance of a proper assessment of project goals and objectives. Evaluation can be formative (process) and/or summative (product). A formative evaluation aims to determine if the project is on track for the planned outcomes. Results of a formative evaluation are immediately implemented to achieve the overall planned project goals. A summative evaluation measures program attainments, including the outcome of the project and the achievement of goals.
         * Organizational background/history or organization capability—The emphasis in this section should be on the institutional facilities and resources that are beneficial to the success of the project. Facilities and resources such as media rooms, libraries, special service units, research apparatus, laboratories, conference rooms, media equipment, computer technology, collaborations, and partnership(s) may be described in such a proposal.
         * Sustainability statement—A sustainability plan will demonstrate your efforts to secure funding beyond the end of the grant period.
         * Budget—The budget section of the proposal should reflect the total cost of the proposed project and include a detailed itemization of all costs allocated to the project. This section should be prepared carefully, as mistakes could lead to: (a) a poor score from reviewers and (b) an unacceptable liability to the University, resulting in non-acceptance of a funding award. The budget justification (which usually does not exceed three pages) should explain and justify each cost item, any unusual situations or inclusions, and the proposed institutional cost sharing if any. Each major budget item must be clearly justified or explained. Make note of the application guidelines, which costs are allowable by the granting agency. Ascertain whether a budget requires approval by the SRP (cost sharing) and Vice President for Academic Affairs (release time and extra compensation). For specific CSU information considering budget preparation, see information on fringe benefits and indirect costs.