

What to say? What to say? Tackling the Grant Writing Process

Grant Writing for the Humanities
A Center for Public History Workshop
Thursday, October 14, 2021
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Plan of Attack

- Define the Project
- Find the Funds
- Do the Basic Groundwork
- Write, Write, Write
- Solicit Reviews
- Submission Checklist
- Submit ... Patience and Planning

The Five W's and an H

- **Who**

- Just you? A team? A collaboration?

- **What**

- Research? Exhibition? Podcast?

- **Where**

- Norway? Archives? Houston Neighborhood?

- **When**

- In August? For the next 3 years?

- **Why**

- What is the Research Question? Will this Change the World?

- **How**

- Oral Histories? Reading Old Texts?

Define the Project

- Clear Research Question/Intervention
- Measurable Results
- Do-able Set of Tasks
- Qualified Team
- Interesting Products
- Reasonable Time-frame

Find the Funds

UH Division of Research/Investigators:

<https://uh.edu/research/investigators/>

- Grantforward: <https://www.grantforward.com/search>
- Grants.gov: <https://www.grants.gov/>

Federal Agencies:

- NEH – Multiple programs
- NSF – Science and Technology Studies
- NIH/National Library of Medicine -
Grants for Scholarly Works in Biomedicine and Health (G13)
- US Department of Education – Fulbright Programs
- National Archives – National Historical Publications & Records Commission

Find the Funds: Look Under Rocks

Unexpected support for dissertation research/conference papers:

- Professional associations
 - Medical
 - Engineering
 - Science
- Archives and Libraries
- Interest Groups
- Smithsonian Institution
- Government Agencies

Do the Basic Groundwork

- Read the Request for Proposals from end-to-end
- Review recent grants made
- Contact grants officer
 - Share your general project idea
 - Does it match program's goals?
 - What are the funder's critical topics? Concerns?
- Contact your institution's research office
 - Review RFP
 - Learn submission requirements
 - Learn process, timeline, deadlines
- Set your own timeline

Write, Write, Write

- **Preliminary Abstract**

- Who, what, where, when, why, and how in **one page**. (Check RFP)
- If possible, ask grants officer to review and provide feedback.

- **Proposal Outline**

- Cover every topic/item called for in RFP
- Backfill outline with Five W's and H

- **Main Text**

- Follow the outline!
- Use language for intelligent reader!
- Clearly state research question/measurable results/products

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Merit Review Criteria (p. III-1 of NSF 22-1)

- When evaluating NSF proposals, reviewers will be asked to **consider what the proposers want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue** if the project is successful. These issues apply both to the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions. To that end, reviewers will be asked to **evaluate all proposals against two criteria:**
 - **Intellectual Merit:** The Intellectual Merit criterion encompasses the potential to advance knowledge; and
 - **Broader Impacts:** The Broader Impacts criterion encompasses the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Sections of the Proposal (p. II-7 of NSF 22-1)

1. Cover Sheet
2. Project Summary
3. Table of Contents
4. Project Description (**Who, what, where, when, why, and how**)
5. References Cited
6. Biographical Sketch(es) (**Who**)
7. Budget and Budget Justification (**when and how**)
8. Current and Pending Support
9. Facilities, Equipment and Other Resources
10. Special Information and Supplementary Documentation
 - Data Management Plan
 - Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan (if applicable)
11. Single Copy Documents (**Formulaic letters of support**)

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Abstract = “Project Summary” (p. II-11 of NSF 22-1)

- Each proposal must contain a summary of the proposed project **not more than one page in length**. The Project Summary consists of an **overview**, a statement on the **intellectual merit** of the proposed activity, and a statement on the **broader impacts** of the proposed activity.
- The overview includes a description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded and a statement of objectives and methods to be employed. The statement on intellectual merit should describe the potential of the proposed activity to advance knowledge. The statement on broader impacts should describe the potential of the proposed activity to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes.
- The Project Summary should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields, and, insofar as possible, understandable to a broad audience within the scientific domain. It should not be an abstract of the proposal.

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Abstract = “Project Summary” (p. II-11 of NSF 22-1)

Outline for Abstract/Project Summary

- **Overview** – what activities will you undertake, what are your objectives, how will you do it?
- **Intellectual merit** - how will this project advance knowledge in your field?
- **Broader impacts** – how will your project benefit society?

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Main Text = “Project Description” (p. II-11 of NSF 22-1)

- The Project Description should provide **a clear statement of the work** to be undertaken and must include the **objectives for the period of the proposed work** and **expected significance; the relationship of this work to the present state of knowledge in the field**, as well as to **work in progress by the PI** under other support.
- The Project Description should **outline the general plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken**, and, where appropriate, provide a clear description of experimental methods and procedures. Proposers should address **what they want to do, why they want to do it, how they plan to do it, how they will know if they succeed, and what benefits could accrue** if the project is successful. The project activities may be based on previously established and/or innovative methods and approaches, but in either case must be well justified. These issues apply to both the technical aspects of the proposal and the way in which the project may make broader contributions.
- **The Project Description also must contain, as a separate section within the narrative, a section labeled “Broader Impacts”**. This section should provide a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to the project. NSF values the advancement of scientific knowledge and activities that contribute to the achievement of societally relevant outcomes.

Write, Write, Write

NSF STS Example

Main Text = “Project Description” (p. II-11 of NSF 22-1)

Outline for Main Text/Project Description:

1. Clear **Statement of Work** (What)
2. **Objectives** (What)
3. Expected Significance (**Intellectual Merit**/Why)
 - a. relationship of this work to the present state of knowledge in the field (e.g. recent historiography)
 - b. work in progress by the PI (and others on the team)
4. **General plan of work** (Five W's and H)
 - a. broad design of activities to be undertaken
 - what you want to do
 - why
 - how
 - how you will know if you succeed
 - what benefits could accrue
5. **Broader Impacts** (Why)

Solicit Reviews and Revise

Ask colleague, friend, or family member:

- Is this a compelling idea?
- Is the project description clear?
- Is the proposal organization logical?
- Is the proposal relevant to the grant opportunity?

Revise accordingly – especially the Abstract

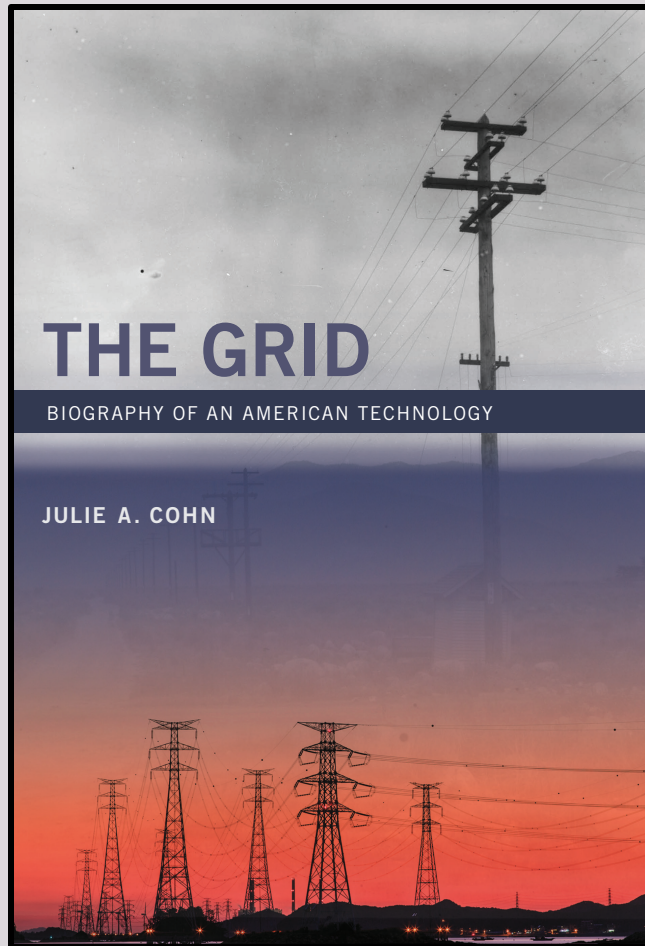
Submission Checklist

- **Funder's Checklist**
- **Institution's Checklist**
- **Your Personal Checklist**

Submit ... Patience and Planning

- **Submit the Proposal**
- **Wait for Result**
- **Look for other funding opportunities**
- **Consider future grant cycles**

Good Luck and Thank You



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