Grant Writing for Language Activists and Linguists

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Day 2

• Homework review
• What do agencies expect?
  – *Every (really, every) funding agency expects different things.*
  – *Finding out what those things are is vital to the success of your proposal.*
  – *We can’t outline every agency’s needs, but we can point you toward how to find out what they are.*

• What do reviewers expect?
• How can you find out?
Satisfying the Agency

Getting Funded Means Satisfying the Agency’s Goals

• As we said yesterday, this may sound completely backward to you.
  – The goals of the project are surely what is important.
• But, this is reality.
• If you have a great proposal for saving a language,
• And you send it to an agency intent on saving the whales,
• How successful do you think you will be?
• Agencies do have goals that will be compatible with yours.
• You just need to find the right match.
Finding the Goals

• Read the Request for Proposals carefully.
• Read them again, carefully.
• Look at funded proposals.
• But don’t believe that the ones that got funded are the only ones that will ever get funded.
  – Funding decisions are often based on choosing the best from among what appeared *that year*.
• In the worst (i.e., normal) case, it may take getting rejected and getting some feedback to find out what it will take.
Interpreting Reviews

• Reviewers ideally assess quality and appropriateness of the proposal and researchers
• The best reviews give good advice for improving proposals
• They also have their own agendas
  – Which can be academic, political or personal
• Some reviews just (try to) sink the proposal
NSF/NEH

National Science Foundation (NSF)/National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH)

- As an example, the Documenting Endangered Languages (DEL) program cannot fund proposals that are primarily aimed at revitalization.
  - They have been very reluctant to fund work on sleeping languages.

- Some times, the project goes the opposite direction: It addresses a theoretical issue, and is more appropriate to the Linguistics program rather than DEL.

- NSF provides a great deal of feedback.
  - Often, more than you would like.
Basics

• A good proposal
  – Being well-written helps.
  – A good idea is more important.

• A believable proposal
  – The agency (through its reviewers) has to think you are capable of achieving what you say you will do.

• An ethical proposal
  – Interactions with communities must be fair.
  – Some institutions (e.g. US universities) have more formal constraints (IRB/HIC approval).
Specifics

• If the agency asks for something, give it to them.
  – Putting your name on the proposal, for example.
    • Yes, we have gotten some without that at ELF.

• This can often be rather unexpected.
  – One foundation required 100% recycled paper, printed on both sides.
  – But more substantial issues are common.
Example: Broader Impacts

• One example is the Broader Impacts of NSF proposals.
• This is for outreach beyond the science:
  – Training of students.
  – Developing infrastructure.
  – Education outside the university.
• This is typically easy for DEL proposals:
  – A last chance to record scientific data.
  – Tremendous outreach to Native communities.
Sample Proposals

• Form groups based on the funding agency you decided to apply to
• Then let’s look at the sample proposals for a few minutes, with these issues in mind.
• Please return the proposals at the end of the exercise; we do not have permission to copy these.
Sample Proposals

• How does the proposal meet the requirements of the funding agency?
  – Format & length requirements?
  – Required information?
  – Appropriate for the type of funding agency?
• Do the reviewers comment on these?
• Tomorrow we will look at them again to ask about credibility and ethics, so ignore these topics today.
Exercise

• Project summary
• Funding agencies will commonly ask you to write a summary of the proposal
• This is used by grant reviewers and may be used for publicity purposes if the grant application is successful.
  – Grabs the attention of the program officer.
  – Helps in selecting reviewers
Exercise

• Write a lead sentence to your summary which clearly states what you are planning to do.
• Now write four to six reasons why your project is significant.
• Think about the audience for this grant – Who is reading it and will your reasons be clear enough, strong enough and specific enough to the funding agency to convince them to give you funding?
• Later you can go back and draft a 100 word summary of the project.
Open Discussion

• What questions have arisen during your homework and looking at these proposals?
Homework

• Overnight, think about who will be the project participants, both internal and external to your community.
• What does each participant specifically bring to the project?
• Write your 100 word summary.
  – A small, fundable part of the big picture.