Leading Practices and Tips for Successful NIH Submissions

By: James J. Casey

For nearly the past ten years, I have served as an NIH/NIAID peer reviewer. This service is most often in areas of HIV/AIDS research, and especially with regards to large center-focused projects. As a peer reviewer my primary responsibilities are in the administrative areas of proposals, including administrative structure and project management, budgets and budget justifications, regulatory compliance (especially human subjects and biosafety), and international participants and their responsibilities.

I offer the following leading practices and tips for successful NIH submissions, and they are provided in no particular order of importance:

1. Contact your NIH program contact as early as possible to receive feedback on your proposed topic. The program officer may be able to give you important feedback and suggestions that will help you focus your idea(s) towards a greater chance of success. And if you are really proactive, ask to receive a previously funded (and redacted) proposal in your research area.

2. Your proposal needs to be internally consistent among the project narrative, budget, and budget justification. For instance, any budget numbers mentioned in the narrative should be consistent with the corresponding numbers in the budget and/or budget justification. Your proposal needs to “hang” well from start to finish.

3. If your project is large enough to request funding for a center, with domestic and/or international subawards, it is critical that your administrative structure be appropriately “sized” - not too lean that the reviewers will believe you cannot successfully manage the project and not so large that peer reviewers will believe that there is administrative “bloat” in your proposal. The latter will be ripe for recommended budget reductions.

4. On large projects with a significant management component, make sure that you are clear about how the project will be managed and how results will be evaluated.
5. When it comes to your technical narrative, ensure that your language is to the point and directed towards wrapping your proposal in a complete manner. Much like peer reviewers who don’t like to see bloat in budgets, many of them don’t like to see it in the technical narrative. Don’t waste precious space on extraneous language. Be succinct yet complete in the technical narrative and the budget justification.

6. Give proper attention to the regulatory compliance portions of the proposal (human subjects, biosafety, animals, etc.). Like in the technical narrative, sloppiness may cause the peer reviewers to question your project and your ability to implement and manage an award. While your regulatory submissions to the compliance office may be “pending,” by the time the award comes in everything should be cleared so that the project can start promptly.

7. Give OSP enough notice that you are applying to NIH - with the hard deadline if one exists - so that OSP staff can provide the highest level of “value added” to your proposal. If you are a subaward to another university or other entity (the “prime”), make sure you work with OSP so that all proper subaward documents are submitted to the "prime" in a timely fashion. These include the project narrative, budget & justification, and institutional letter of support.

8. Background information and prior research are important in many technical narratives. However, such introduction is often too long, not leaving enough space for a detailed discussion of the project. It is critically important to follow page limits in proposal sections. Be succinct in the introductory section.

9. If there is enough time, ask a trusted and critical colleague to review your proposal narrative. This is a very useful method of "quality control" in many instances.

10. Speak with your faculty peers who have been successful in receiving NIH grants, and find out what worked for them.

One final point about proposals in general. OSP is dedicated to the prompt review and submission of your grant proposals. This is our core pre-award business function that is also central to the AU research administration ecosystem. A future issue will have more to say about this ecosystem.
IRB Applications to Move Online - Pilot Users Needed

The IRB will retire paper and PDF applications and forms this fall, and move to the new online protocol management system, Cayuse IRB. If you are interested in being a pilot user before the official launch, please contact the Office of Research Integrity office at x3447 or irb@american.edu.

Are you certified?

Research Administration Certification (RAC) Program

RAC is a training and certification program designed to assist AU departmental and school/college level staff with research administration and management responsibilities. This 8-session program provides vital information to enable participants to effectively manage sponsored awards and function well in the research administration ecosystem.

If you have outstanding quizzes or would copies of a particular session’s information please e-mail Afielder@american.edu

To be eligible to receive the RAC Certificate of Completion all eight sessions must be completed before June 15, 2015.

RAC Graduation Reception—Save the Date!

Date: June 29, 2015
Time: 10:00—12:00pm
Location: TBD
A New Form of Funding: Giving Circles

Giving Circles -- a form of shared giving and social investment networking -- represent a growing trend in philanthropy as community organizations established by individuals are seeking to have greater involvement in their giving. Also, there are broader issues and trends in philanthropy as a whole that are making "Giving Circles" as a mode for individual giving more attractive and fulfilling.

In short, a giving circle is a pooled fund, generally hosted or sponsored by a charitable organization such as a community foundation, through which members make grants together. They are typically organized around a particular issue or area of interest, such as women's issues, quality of life, or the environment, and are considered a high engagement form of philanthropy because donors usually participate in collective decision making and educational activities.

Currently, there are 400 Giving Circles documented nationwide. As of 2006, there were 400 catalogued Giving Circles in 44 states and the District of Columbia. Approximately 40% (160) of them surveyed have alone raised $88 million since their inception (most since the year 2000) and granted almost $65 million to fund community needs. Giving Circles are ethnically diverse, with a majority female (in members) but are increasingly co-ed or all male (47%), and comprised of all formality levels and sizes.

To learn more about giving circles, a great central point of reference would be the Giving Circles Network (GCN). As an organization, GCN has a mission of facilitating networking among non-affiliated individuals and among new or existing giving circle, providing Giving Circles and individuals with information, and enabling Giving Circles and individuals to achieve greater impact in their giving by providing guides on how to better analyze prospective charities.

Below are two of the area’s well-known Giving Circles:

**Women’s Giving Circle:** The Women’s Giving Circle launched in 2004 as a way to encourage women to become more involved philanthropically in Washington County. Minimum membership in the Circle is $100 annually and is open to all residents of the county. One half of all yearly contributions are included with endowment earnings to support the current granting cycle. The Women’s Giving Circle secures the remaining amount in the endowment to ensure growth and future grants.

**Cherry Blossom Giving Circle:** This grant funding is for efforts that would increase the linguistic and cultural capacity of qualified community-based organizations seeking to provide direct services to low-income limited English proficient/ non-English proficient AAPI residents and merchants. Such services would increase these populations’ capacity for independence into the general community in the following areas: Strategic Planning and Leadership Development, Fundraising and Financial Management, Internal Operations, and Communications and Advocacy.
OMB to Agencies: Ensure Non Profit From Federal Awards

The Office of Management and Budget is putting federal funding agencies “on alert” when “allowing management fees or profit in the terms and conditions” of an award, according to a recently issued Controller Alert — a memo that discusses new financial management topics — entitled “Management Fees or Profit under Federal Assistance Awards.”

OMB tells awarding agencies to “carefully consider whether there is an appropriate justification for” management fees or profit in an award, and suggests that they have “controls, policy or guidance for Federal award officials to consult when determining whether management fees or profit are appropriate.

For instance, Federal awarding agencies should review and receive a reasonable justification and explanation from the potential recipient that provides the intended use of the management fees or profits.”

OMB’s uniform guidance (at 2 CFR §200.400(g)) allows for the use of either management fees or profit only in rare circumstances, OMB said. The agency is also collecting data from federal agencies on how widespread the practice of grantees being allowed to earn management fees or profit is and the state of individual federal agency policy on the topic. Responses to this data collection are due to OMB by May 29.

The Controller Alert was reported by AIS’s sister publication, Report on Research Compliance, in its May 2015 issue.

Research Space at Colleges & Univ. Continues to Increase

The National Science Foundation’s National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics calls itself “the nation’s leading provider of statistical data on the U.S. science and engineering enterprise.” It publishes approximately 30 statistical reports each year, most of which are regularly scheduled (annual/biennial) updates.

Its key report, “Science and Engineering Indicators,” is one such annual, and it includes major data on U.S. and international science and investments, with a couple of chapters focusing specifically on higher education and academic research and development. NCSES undertakes its surveys and reports the results in a factual and “policy neutral” manner, according to its website.

Updated numbers concerning one data item — the amount of research space at research colleges and universities — were recently released. The amount of space increased 4.7% between fiscal years 2011–2013, according to the biennial Survey of Science and Engineering Research Facilities.

The biological and biomedical sciences, along with agricultural and natural resources science, accounted for two-thirds of total growth. Research space in computer and information sciences declined by 14% over the period.

New construction of S&E research space that began in FYs 2012–13 declined 17.3%, compared with construction that started in FYs 2010–11. Statistics Link
Spotlight on Resources
Librarian Profile: Martin Shapiro

This first article in a new series of librarian profiles focuses on Humanities Librarian Martin Shapiro. With expertise in a range of subjects, Martin is able to provide excellent reference.

Humanities Librarian Mr. Shapiro has been helping students and faculty at the American University Library since 1990. As a poet, art enthusiast, and former science librarian – Martin’s range of expertise means he can support students across a variety of disciplines.

As a proficient Spanish speaker, Martin is an ideal resource for PIs preparing for travel abroad, studying the language, or exploring Latin American culture or related research. Martin’s experience as a writer means that he can provide helpful guidance to anyone interested in strengthening their writing.

Where can you find him? Although he can often be found at the Reference Desk, offering walk-in research assistance, Martin also provides in-class research instruction for Creative Writing and Literature.

Want more in-depth help? Make an appointment for an individual subject consultation by clicking here (http://www.american.edu/library/forms/research_question.cfm).

Why he loves his job.

As an educator, Martin’s favorite part of the job is “getting to the heart of a question” while working with students. “The most wonderful thing is exploring and finding another path to the information, when one way is blocked. It is terrific to see the look on a student’s face when they have a break-through in their research.”

Another gratifying responsibility is determining which materials would be needed to support proposed and new programs. Martin’s recent work to support the growing Arabic Studies major at AU has been both challenging and rewarding, as he helps the Library track down hard-to-find books that can only be ordered from publishers and book sellers in the Middle East.

In the community. Martin also brings his talents as a writer to the University and the DC community, through his organization of a monthly writing workshop, his attendance at the Bread Loaf Writer’s Conference, and his poetry. Although he does not limit himself to a single genre or school, Martin treats poetry as a daily discipline.

Martin brings that same energy and enthusiasm to his work with collections, instruction, and reference assistance. Working with the Research, Teaching, and Learning Division at the Library has been “revitalizing” for Martin and he enjoys being surrounded by students and a part of a dynamic, rapidly changing environment.

Questions about researcher specific resources?

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<th>Copyright:</th>
<th>Chris Lewis (202) 885-3251</th>
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<td>Data Management:</td>
<td>Sefan Kramer (202) 885-3844</td>
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Dear AU researchers and research administrators:

This **interim** constituency flow chart illustrates how OSP is handling pre-award and post-award non-financial research administration responsibilities until OSP is again fully staffed. Because this is an interim document, it will be revised again once a pre-award grant and contract manager is hired to join Irina Komives on one pre-award team (right side of the page). Also, note that for SPA, Library, KSB, and SPEX, proposals and other pre-award needs may be communicated directly to Irina Komives or to the OSP@american.edu mailbox. During this interim period, Irina and Shira Lowinger are monitoring the OSP mailbox and handling those requests as appropriate. As mentioned in our April 21, 2015, email to the units affected by the grant and contract manager vacancy, a search is now under way to bring on board as quickly as possible a stellar addition to OSP. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this interim period and please contact your OSP representative or myself if you have any questions.

Best regards,

Jim Casey, OSP Director
Note: Please note that these offerings are a sampling of what is available via our search funding tools and serve as examples for you to consider. If you have not attended a “search funding tool” training session, we encourage you to do so. Performing an individualized search, tailored to your unit or specific research interests will provide the most exhaustive means of locating resources. Please contact Afelder@american.edu with any questions related to our search funding tools.

**College of Arts and Sciences**

**William T. Grant Foundation - Reducing Inequality**
Inequality by economic, race/ethnic, linguistic, and immigrant origin status is pervasive in the United States, and in many ways it has become more extreme in recent decades. The Foundation funds research to inform programs, policies, and practices to reduce inequality in youth outcomes. Some studies may examine approaches that improve outcomes for all youth, but can reduce gaps if applied to those who need them most. Others may identify programs, policies, and practices aimed at elevating the most disadvantaged young people. The Foundation also encourages descriptive studies meant to clarify the leverage points or mechanisms that should be addressed in future work. In addition, they are interested in studies that improve the measurement of inequality in ways that will enhance the work of researchers, practitioners, or policymakers.

**Deadline: July 8 2015 and August 4, 2015**

**National Institute of Health - National Cooperative Drug Discovery/Development Groups (NCDDG) for the Treatment of Mental Disorders, Drug or Alcohol Addiction**
The purpose of the National Cooperative Drug Discovery/Development Group (NCDDG) Program is to create multidisciplinary research groups or partnerships for the discovery of pharmacological agents to treat and to study mental illness, drug or alcohol addiction. The objectives of this program are to: accelerate innovative drug discovery; develop pharmacologic tools for basic and clinical research on mental disorders, or drug or alcohol addiction; develop and validate models for evaluating novel therapeutics for mental disorders; and support early phase human clinical testing to rapidly assess the safety and efficacy of promising drug candidates and new indications for IND-ready agents for the treatment of mental disorders or alcohol addiction. The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), and the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) encourage applications to advance the discovery, preclinical development, and proof of concept testing of new, rationally based candidate agents to treat mental disorders or drug or alcohol addiction, and to develop novel ligands as tools to further characterize existing or to validate new drug targets. Partnerships between academia and industry are strongly encouraged.

**Deadline: June 22, 2015**

**National Institute of Health - Neuroscience Research on Drug Abuse (R03)**
Substance abuse results in widespread changes in brain structure and function, and research is needed to explain these changes and how they affect behavior. The goals of the research areas described in this Neuroscience of Drug Abuse FOA are to understand the neurobiological mechanisms underlying drug abuse and addiction, with special emphasis on changes that occur during chronic drug use, withdrawal and relapse. An understanding of the basic mechanisms underlying drug addiction can help to identify targets for prevention and treatment interventions. Research utilizing basic, translational, or clinical approaches is appropriate.

**Deadline: June 16, 2015**
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School of Public Affairs

Institute of Education Sciences- Special Education Policy, Finance, and Systems CFDA 84.324A
The Special Education Policy, Finance, and Systems (Policy/Systems) topic supports research that contributes to the improvement of education for students with disabilities or at risk for disabilities from kindergarten through Grade 12. Rather than focusing on improving student outcomes by changing curricula or student-level intervention approaches, researchers will conduct research on systems-level practices and policies (e.g., organizational strategies, financial and management practices) that are intended to improve the management, coordination, and implementation of systemic programs and services in ways that directly enhance the overall intervention or education environment, and indirectly improve student outcomes. The long-term outcome of this program will be an array of systems-level practices and policies that have been documented to be effective for improving the education or intervention environment and thereby improving outcomes for students with or at risk for disabilities from kindergarten through Grade 12.

Deadline: May 21, 2015

Open Society Foundations- Open Society Fellowship
The Open Society Fellowship was founded in 2008 to support individuals pursuing innovative and unconventional approaches to fundamental open society challenges. The fellowship funds work that will enrich public understanding of those challenges and stimulate far-reaching and probing conversations within the Open Society Foundations and in the world. A fellowship project might identify a problem that has not previously been recognized, develop new policy ideas to address familiar problems, or offer a new advocacy strategy. Project themes should cut across at least two areas of interest to the Open Society Foundations. Among these are human rights, government transparency, access to information and to justice, and the promotion of civil society and social inclusion.

Deadline: August 3, 2015

National Institute of Health - PHS 2014-02 Omnibus Solicitation of the NIH, CDC, FDA and ACF for Small Business Innovation Research Grant
This Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) issued by the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) invites eligible United States small business concerns (SBCs) to submit Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) grant applications. United States SBCs that have the research capabilities and technological expertise to contribute to the R&D mission(s) of the NIH, CDC, FDA or ACF awarding components identified in this FOA are encouraged to submit SBIR grant applications in response to identified topics.

Deadline: Cycle I September 5, 2015
Funding Opportunities Organized by School/Department

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School of Communication

National Endowment for the Humanities- Digital Projects for the Public
Digital Projects for the Public grants support projects that significantly contribute to the public’s engagement with the humanities. Digital platforms—such as websites, mobile applications and tours, interactive touch screens and kiosks, games, and virtual environments—can reach diverse audiences and bring the humanities to life for the American people. The program offers three levels of support for digital projects: grants for Discovery projects (early-stage planning work), Prototyping projects (proof-of-concept development work), and Production projects (end-stage production and distribution work). While projects can take many forms, shapes, and sizes, your request should be for an exclusively digital project or for a digital component of a larger project.

Deadline: June 10, 2015

Sundance Institute - Documentary Fund
The Fund provides creative and financial support to cinematic, feature documentaries from independent filmmakers globally. The Fund provides $1M to $2M in non-recoupable financing annually across all stages of development, production, post production, and strategic audience engagement. Submit your film only when you have written or visual material that demonstrates your creative and storytelling intent. You may submit at any production phase from development through post-production. ALL proposals MUST convey some vision for a finished film. Projects that have not yet secured characters or subjects, are unable to articulate a story structure, or unable to explain the story's driving central question are discouraged. We are unable to consider proposals for story research. You do not need any prior funding or a fiscal sponsor in order to apply.

Deadline: August 3, 2015
Note: Please note that these offerings are a sampling of what is available via our search funding tools and serve as examples for you to consider. If you have not attended a “search funding tool” training session, we encourage you to do so. Performing an individualized search, tailored to your unit or specific research interests will provide the most exhaustive means of locating resources. Please contact Afelder@american.edu with any questions related to our search funding tools.

School of International Service

The Niwano Peace Foundation- Grass-roots activities deployed on a local community Grant
The Niwano Peace Foundation inaugurated its grant-awarding activities in 1979, the year after its establishment, to support research and activities that foster peace. Grants have been awarded every year since then. Under the overall rubric of all fields having to do with religion, grants are awarded to support research and activities in such areas as religious cooperation, the societal role of religion, religious conflict and its reconciliation, progress in religion and technology, religion and medicine, and dedicated social activities undertaken in a religious spirit.

Deadline: July 1, 2015

The Newton Fund- Workshop Grants
The Newton Fund is part of the UK’s official development assistance program the fund is £75 million each year from 2014 for five years. Through the Newton Fund, the UK will use its strength in research and innovation to promote economic development and social welfare of partner countries. By working together on research and innovation projects, the UK will build strong and sustainable relationships with partner countries. This will support the continued excellence of UK research and innovation to unlock opportunities for wider collaboration and trade.

Deadline: July 13, 2015

American Council on Germany- Dr. Guido Goldman Fellowship For The Study Of German And European Economic and International Affairs
The Dr. Guido Goldman Fellowship for the Study of German and European Economic and International Affairs supports promising American academics whose research bears special significance for German economic and international policy within the wider European context. The fellowship was established in 2003 to honor political scientist and longtime ACG Board Member Guido Goldman, Director of German Studies at the Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies at Harvard University and former Co-Chairman of the Board of the German Marshall Fund of the United States. Dr. Goldman has devoted his career to the study of economics and foreign relations as they apply to transatlantic affairs. The Dr. Guido Goldman Fellowship covers the cost of preapproved international and intercity travel and provides a per diem stipend of $200 for up to 28 days in Germany. Fellows are required to develop research itineraries in consultation with the American Council on Germany. Following the completion of the trip, fellows submit a report summarizing their findings. Fellowship must be taken within one calendar year of receipt of the award.

Deadline: July 1, 2015
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Washington College of Law

The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) Research Grant Program
The Law School Admission Council (LSAC) Research Grant Program funds research on a wide variety of topics related to the mission of LSAC. Specifically included in the program’s scope are projects investigating precursors to legal training, selection into law schools, legal education, and the legal profession. To be eligible for funding, a research project must inform either the process of selecting law students or legal education itself in a demonstrable way. Projects will be funded for amounts up to $200,000. The program welcomes proposals for research proceeding from any of a variety of methodologies, a potentially broad range of topics, and varying time frames. Proposals will be judged on the importance of the questions addressed, their relevance to the mission of LSAC, the quality of the research designs, and the capacity of the researchers to carry out the project. Eligible investigators need not be members of law school faculties. Proposals from interdisciplinary teams of law faculty and researchers from outside law schools are strongly encouraged.

Deadline: August 15, 2015

American Society of Criminology - The Teaching Award
The Teaching Award (established in 2008) is a lifetime-achievement award designed to recognize excellence in undergraduate and/or graduate teaching over the span of an academic career. This award is meant to identify and reward teaching excellence that has been demonstrated by individuals either (a) at one educational institution where the nominee is recognized and celebrated as a master teacher of criminology and criminal justice; or, (b) at a regional or national level as a result of that individual’s sustained efforts to advance criminological/criminal justice education. Any faculty member who holds a full- or part-time position teaching criminology or criminal justice is eligible for the award, inclusive of graduate and undergraduate universities as well as two- and four-year colleges. In addition, faculty members who have retired are eligible within the first two years of retirement. Faculty may be nominated by colleagues, peers, or students, or they may self-nominate, by writing a letter of nomination to the Chair of the Teaching Awards Committee. Letters of nomination must include a statement in support of nomination of not more than three pages. The nominee and/or the nominator may write the statement.

Deadline: April 1, 2015
Encourage those who are not on the newsletter subscription list to join!
To receive OSP Monthly, please send an email to listserv@listserv.american.edu with the following information in the body:
- Subscribe
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REMINDERS

- Have you submitted your outstanding RAC quizzes to GCA/OSP?
- Are you interested in being added to the wait list for our next RAC session?
- Do you have a story or article idea? Our standard content deadline is the 20th of the month prior.
- Do you have an “OSP Spotlight on Research” interview suggestion?
- Do you need to scheduled a “One on One” refresher session for one of our search funding tool databases? Grant Forward, Pivot COS or The Foundation Directory Online (Professional version)?

If you need assistance with any of the above items, please contact OSP’s Communications Manager, Ms. Akidah Felder via e-mail Afelder@american.edu

What to expect in next month’s OSP Monthly:
- Vice Provost’s Corner
- GAR Recap
- Funding Opportunities

Contact Information
Office of Sponsored Programs
202-885-3440
osp@american.edu
www.american.edu/provost/osp/index.cfm