

## Time Management for the Grant

Whether you are a novice or experienced grant writer, undertaking a proposal project to secure funding can be an intimidating, overwhelming and anxiety producing process. However the experience of grant writing need not be negative. With preparation, self-knowledge and guidance, intimidation can be converted to anticipation, anxiety to excitement, and fear to creativity. A sound project management and scheduling system can help to convert these negative associations to positive ones and remove the anxiety associated with grant proposal writing

One of the first ideas to grasp is that you already possess project management strategies that you can adapt to grant proposal writing. As with any complex project, the most effective time management systems allow you to place the grant proposal within a reasonable perspective, set realizable goals, organize and plan your time, and encourage reflection on grant writing progress. It is important to realize that the release of an RFP is not the signal for developing a completely new work style. Rather, it is critical that you rely on the strengths and strategies that have already carried you to success in your academic career. Know and trust your organizational and writing process and use new strategies with care.

Explicit knowledge of your most effective planning and writing strategies are essential to the proposal process because of foreshortened timelines and the possibility for unexpected changes in focus. The reality of a grant writer's life regularly includes delayed RFPs without concomitant deadline extensions, shifts in mission and objectives for previously stable grants as well as significant changes in expected proposal organization and requirements. There is **no one best method** for overcoming these challenges. Flexibility and confidence linked to an effective time management system are crucial to both the novice and the professional grant seeker's success. To help remove anxiety associated with grant proposal writing, you may wish to incorporate some of following suggestions into your own project management and scheduling system. Whether you choose to adopt this system or just aspects of it--the most critical factors in a successful time management plan are writing your schedule down and setting realizable goals. Included at the end of this section are selected planning and scheduling aids that may make your management task easier.

### Place Your Project into Perspective: Assigning Time for Reflection and Planning

- Assign time to realistically consider the relative importance of the proposal to your graduate research. Recognize that the proposal is not a final product but a beginning. Do not make it more important than it needs to be. Revisit this assessment from time to time.
- Assign time to read the RFP or proposal guidelines at least two times. Be sure that you come away with a complete understanding of the proposal's requirements.

- Assign time to learn what the lettered, numbered, or named sections of your RFP or proposal guidelines represent. For example Section C is Scope-of-the-Work or Section 3 is Statement of Purpose.
- **Immediately** consult a reliable local source or contact the contracting officer, agency or organization for clarification if you don't understand information in the RFP or guidelines.

### **Set Realizable Goals: Identifying Sub-categories**

- Create a project planning chart that identifies smaller sections of the proposal that when combined comprise the whole.
- Decide how to order your approach to these sections. Conceptualize these sections in an outline or annotated outline, a chart or concept map.
- Indicate the estimated number of pages that will be written for each subsection and the major points that are to be covered in the discussion.
- Set realistic daily writing or technical task deadlines.

### **Establish Realistic Deadlines: Scheduling**

- Translate the language of pages or technical tasks into the language of time. Set specific calendar due dates for each section. Be sure to overestimate.
- Post due dates on a calendar that you can keep in front of you while working. Effective schedules are written schedules.
- Mark off designated writing times on a weekly/daily calendar.
- Work backwards from the proposal due date to assign deadlines.
- Consider a parallel or separate schedule for the cost/budget section of the proposal. It sometimes saves time to rough out a budget before completing the narrative sections of the proposal.
- Allot plenty of time for securing institutional approval for your proposal, if required. This generally means submitting the budget section and an abstract to Research Services for approval.
- Allow sufficient time for production, copying and delivery of the proposal. Have a back-up plan should these tasks drift off course.

**Review your Progress: Reflecting and Trouble Shooting**

- Review your progress regularly and adjust your schedule to accommodate your rate of progress.
- Assess your project management system according to your progress. Use extreme care when introducing change into the system.
- Revisit your assessment of the grant proposal's position and importance to your graduate career.
- Remain positive, present, honest and guilt-free