GUERILLA GRANT DEVELOPMENT: HOW (PUI) SROs CAN MAKE FACULTY APPLICATIONS MORE COMPETITIVE

A PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP

NCURA REGION VI/VII SPRING MEETING 2012

KELLY DELFATTI, LEWIS & CLARK COLLEGE
KENDRA MINGO, WILLAMETTE UNIVERSITY
WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Objectives: In this interactive session, participants will

• Identify the roles SROs play and discuss how each role contributes to grant and research development
• Define and identify features of grant readiness
• Brainstorm guerilla tactics that lead to competitive, fundable proposals

Participants will leave this session with:

• Tools to help faculty assess their grant readiness
• New ideas and tactics to help faculty make their proposals more competitive
WHO WE REPRESENT - SIMILAR, BUT DIFFERENT INSTITUTIONS

Lewis & Clark College (Portland, Oregon)
Willamette University (Salem, Oregon)

- PUIs, liberal arts colleges
- Have professional schools (Law, Education, Business)
- Approx. 120-155 tenure line faculty
- Similar ranking
- Increasing focus on importance of research
- Strong undergraduate research programs
SPONSORED RESEARCH AT L&C AND WILLAMETTE

• Size and structure
• Primary function: pre-award/research development; Number of Proposals submitted per year: 50-75
• Secondary functions: non-financial post-award and compliance
• Funding Sources: NSF, NIH, NEH, NEA, Research Corp, Dreyfus, Murdock, HHMI, Misc. Fellowships, etc.
• Approximate External Research Funding: $1.0-$1.2M/year
• Funding Rates
GOAL: INCREASE RESEARCH SUPPORT

1. What can we – as SROs – do to increase the likelihood of competitive, fundable proposals?

2. How can we help faculty members improve their grant readiness?

3. How can we help faculty members turn their great idea(s) into a great proposal?
CONSIDER SOME SRO ROLES

Research Administrators

What our families think we do

What PIs think we do

What deans/directors think we do

What we think we do

What our bosses think we do

What we actually do
SO WHAT ROLES DO WE PLAY?

Brainstorm:
Take several minutes to think about the roles you play as an SRO.

"Just remember, they can't outsource your job if they don't know what you do."
SOME OF THE MANY ROLES OF A RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL

- Grant Writer
- Editor
- Connector
- Matchmaker
- Information broker
- Financial analyst
- Career counselor
- Librarian/archivist
- Interpreter
- Cheerleader
- Hand-holder

- Educator
- Researcher
- Auditor
- Police officer
- Institutional representative
- PI representative
- Sponsor representative
- Psychologist
- Resource
- Advocate
SRO ROLES – AND GOAL

• Ultimate goal: Submit a fundable, competitive, “ready” grant proposal
• Why consider various SRO roles?
  • Think outside your standard toolbox to find solutions
  • Different roles = different lens through which to solve a problem
  • Grantsmanship vs. grant readiness
EXAMPLE 1: GRANTSMAINSHP

“The introduction is excellent, and one has a perfectly clear view of the PI/co-PI’s general field of interest and specific plans for research after reading it. Then the proposal goes on to present the theorems proved by the PI/co-PI (not supported by NSF) related to the projected work, in excruciating mathematical detail. Nearly the entire proposal is much more like a review article of their past achievements than a research proposal.”

“The main conjecture is stated on page 11, for which the previous one page of explanations can be considered as a detailed strategy of possible proof. Following this, there is one more page of several possible additional directions of research, but no more. This 80%-20% ratio of background material to explanation of plans for research should presumably have been reversed, as I am certain that the PI/co-PI could have written much more about the topics they mention of pages 11 and 12.”
EXAMPLE 2: NOT A GRANTMANSHP PROBLEM

“It would appear that co-PI #2 has no prior experience with the types of NMR experiments he proposes. Showing some data acquired from these systems on a 400-MHz NMR spectrometer would significantly strengthen this part of the proposal. Co-PI #2 does not currently have external funding for either of his projects, and has not published any research articles independent of his Ph.D. advisor.”
GRANT READINESS – WHAT IS IT?

Definition of grant readiness –

*Having the necessary preparation, qualifications, training, expertise, networks, resources, infrastructure, organization, time, attitude and perspective to develop and carry out the proposed project.*

What contributes to grant readiness?
GRANT READINESS – OUR COLLECTIVE WISDOM

Question for Discussion

1. Brainstorm and record answers to the question:

   *How do you know when a PI or a proposal isn’t ready?*

2. Record your answers on post-it notes.

3. Share observations.
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN A PI OR A PROPOSAL ISN’T READY?

• Didn’t follow the guidelines (worked without the help of our office)
• Put application together at the last minute
• Competition is very steep (i.e., 8% funding rate) – just not enough money to go around
• For more senior faculty, a weak publication record can be a detriment
• Lack organization so that the proposal is really hard to follow
• Assuming that the reviewers know something
HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN A PI OR A PROPOSAL ISN’T READY?

• Not paying attention to details (formatting, eligibility, etc.)
• Overly ambitious
• Work is a preliminary study or is a step needed to submit the application—not an application unto itself
• Work plan is not feasible in the institutional context and doesn’t have department/administrative support
• Work is not grounded in theory or connected to what else is happening in the world (missing critical and obvious literature citations)
CATEGORIES OF GRANT READINESS

• Reviewing the Idea
• Determining Fit - Know your sponsor
• Research Positioning
• Resources & Institutional Support
• PI Qualifications and Credentials
• Colleagues and Connections
• Timing
• Attitude
• Other?

1. Take a minute and post your examples into one of these categories.
2. Outcome – We will use your examples to update the questionnaire and then disseminate it to the group.
SRO RELEVANCE TO GRANT READINESS

Goal: Turn problems (readiness issues) into solutions, which then translates to success.

Example: Faculty Grant Readiness Workshop

1. Complete the Readiness Questionnaire. (5-10 min)
2. Share your answers with a partner. (5-10 min)
   - What are your strengths?
   - In what areas can you improve your grant readiness?
   - What abilities/skills/resources do you need in order to be ready to prepare a competitive proposal?
3. Share your observations with group. (15 min)
## USING GRANT READINESS QUESTIONNAIRE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What advantages do you have?</td>
<td>• What could you improve?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do you do well?</td>
<td>• What do you do badly?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What relevant resources do you have access to?</td>
<td>• What should you avoid doing?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What do other people see as your strengths?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities:</th>
<th>Threats:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• What are the good opportunities facing you right now?</td>
<td>• What obstacles might you face in your professional life?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• What are the interesting trends of which you are aware?</td>
<td>• What obstacles might you face in your personal life?</td>
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</tbody>
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HELPING FACULTY AVOID COMMON MISTAKES

“The PIs are working on interesting and challenging problems, but they are very early in their careers. It seems most appropriate to wait until they take on more of a leadership role in their research before recommending them for funding.”

1. What category of readiness is this? What’s the problem?
2. What would you suggest to the PI who received this comment if you were acting in the role of EDUCATOR?
“A major concern discussed by the panel was that the PI appears to have built his model on a number of somewhat questionable or at least poorly substantiated observations. Heat stress may affect cells in many different ways, and the idea that heat impacts the signal transduction pathway directly was questioned from this perspective. The use of guard cell protoplasts instead of intact plants was also considered to be a significant weakness in the study (the final aim proposes to do this, but could be expanded in other components of the proposal).”

1. What category of readiness is this? What’s the problem?
2. What would you suggest to the PI who received this comment if you were acting in the role of MATCHMAKER?
TACTICS THAT LEAD TO COMPETITIVE PROPOSALS

*How do you help faculty create READY, competitive, fundable proposals?*

Brainstorm Activity:

Provide one specific example of something you’ve done – or that you regularly do – at your institution that helped a faculty member submit a more READY competitive proposal. Or... turned a good proposal into a great proposal... or something you did as an SRO (which hat?) that contributed to success in some way?
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