

Grants: Application and Management in the Medical Discipline

Friday Okonofua, MD, PhD, FAS
University of Benin, Benin City
Workshop on Grants Writing –
NUC, March 13, 2014

4 RULES OF SUCCESSFUL GRANT APPLICATION

RULE 1:

Ask and you might be given; If you do not ask,
you are most unlikely to get a grant

Rule 2:

If you fail the first time, keep trying. The more
you try, the more you are likely to succeed

RULES FOR SUCCESSFUL GRANT WRITING

RULE 3:

Get assurances (some commitment) first before writing a full grant application. Never write a full grant unless you have some assurance of funding.

RULE 4:

Always follow the guidelines of the Funding Agency

Academics – not always the best fund-seekers!

- Too introspective
- More committed to personal advancement
- Less attuned to social change goals
- Less collaborative and perform poorly in larger networks



External Funding in Nigerian Universities

- Most Nigerian Universities depend on government subventions, with very limited external funding
- Even if we achieve the 26% of GDP funding recommended by UNESCO, this will still not be sufficient to meet the needs of all Universities
- Multiple funding sources is crucial to ensuring that our Universities are world-rated.



Grants Writing in Nigerian Universities: UNILAG Example

- 5% of staff have ever written a grant application
- 3 of 150 academic staff in one Faculty have ever obtained an international grant
- 10% of staff know a source of funding in their discipline
- 3% ever attended a proposal writing workshop



Grants Writing: The Harvard Example

- All academic staff are actively involved in grants application
- Employments are based on ability to obtain grants
- The role of “no grants, no tenure” apply
- Up to 50% of annual budget, which is more than budgets of many African countries come from grants



Factors Limiting Grants Application in Nigeria

- Lack of a culture of grant application
- Our focus on “writing for promotion” rather than to advance our fields of interest
- Lack of track records
- Inability to write good proposals: the best academic not always the best grant-writer
- Absence of local enabling factors

Academic vs. Grant writing

Academic Writing

- Scholarly pursuit:
 - Individual passion
- Past oriented:
 - Work that has been done
- Theme-centered:
 - Theory and thesis
- Expository rhetoric:
 - Explaining to reader

Grant Writing

- Sponsor goals:
 - Service Attitude
- Future oriented:
 - Work that should be done
- Project-centered:
 - Objectives and activities
- Persuasive rhetoric:
 - “selling the reader”

Academic Vs. Grant Writing

Academic Writing

- Impersonal tone:
 - Objective, dispassionate
- Individualistic:
 - Primarily a solo activity
- Few length constraints
 - Verbosity rewarded
- Specialized terminology
 - “insider jargon”
 - Technical language

Grant Writing

- Personal tone:
 - Conveys excitement
- Team-focused:
 - Feedback needed
- Strict length constraints:
 - Brevity rewarded
- Accessible language:
 - Easily understood
 - Less technical language

Steps in the Grant-writing process

- Concept letter/Response to RFA to a novel idea
- Draft full proposal
- Collate supporting documents
- Final proposal and submit with documents
- Wait for reply, and follow up
- If successful, implement project
- If unsuccessful, find out why not and try again



Writing Concept Papers

- Is best when solicited, but could be unsolicited
- Could be written as a letter or in a structured format
- Include short introduction/justification, project objectives, brief method, expected outcomes and summary budget
- 2-5 pages long
- As for next steps



Unsuccessful Concept Papers!

- Find out the reasons for failure – use the reasons to revise the concept and forward to other agencies
- Also, find out from the initial agency, who else funds in the area
- If you think the idea is novel, do not give up!



Successful Concept Papers

- Write to thank the Funding Agency for accepting the CP, and assure them you would be sending a full proposal
- Ask for more details about the writing guidelines.
- Study the details with your writing team before you start

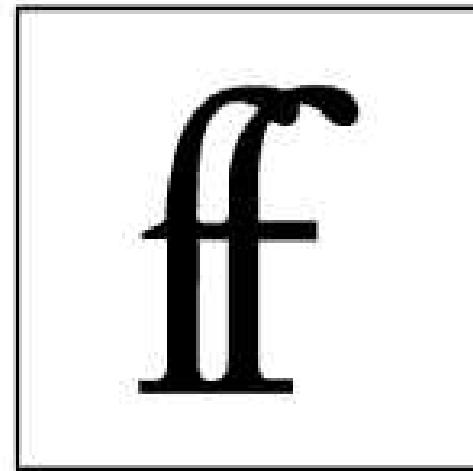


Components of a full proposal

- Executive Summary/Abstract
- Justification: why is this project necessary?
- Project description or Narrative: the nuts and bolts of how the project will be implemented (might be 3 pages or 20 pages! See agency requirements.)
- Budget: what are you going to use the \$ for?
- Organization info
- Conclusion: summary
- See Agency's guidelines for sections to include

Ford Foundation Guidelines

- Brief Project justification
- Brief about the organization
- Organizational experiences
- Project goal
- Project specific objectives
- Project activities
- Monitoring and Evaluation
- Project Indicators
- Work plan
- Grant Budget
- Supporting Documents



Ford Foundation

Proposal Title

- Should be concise to give reviewer a sense of what you are investigating.
- Avoid long and technical title that will not gain the reviewer's attention or interest.
- Also avoid too short and broad a title will make the reviewer too critical of grant.

Example of a good title:

Increasing women's access to skilled birth attendants in Akure North LGA of Ondo State

Project Justification

- Should be clear, succinct and persuasive
- The writer must portray an acute need for the project
- It should be a new idea and not be duplicative
- The writer must show good knowledge of recent developments in the discipline

Goal

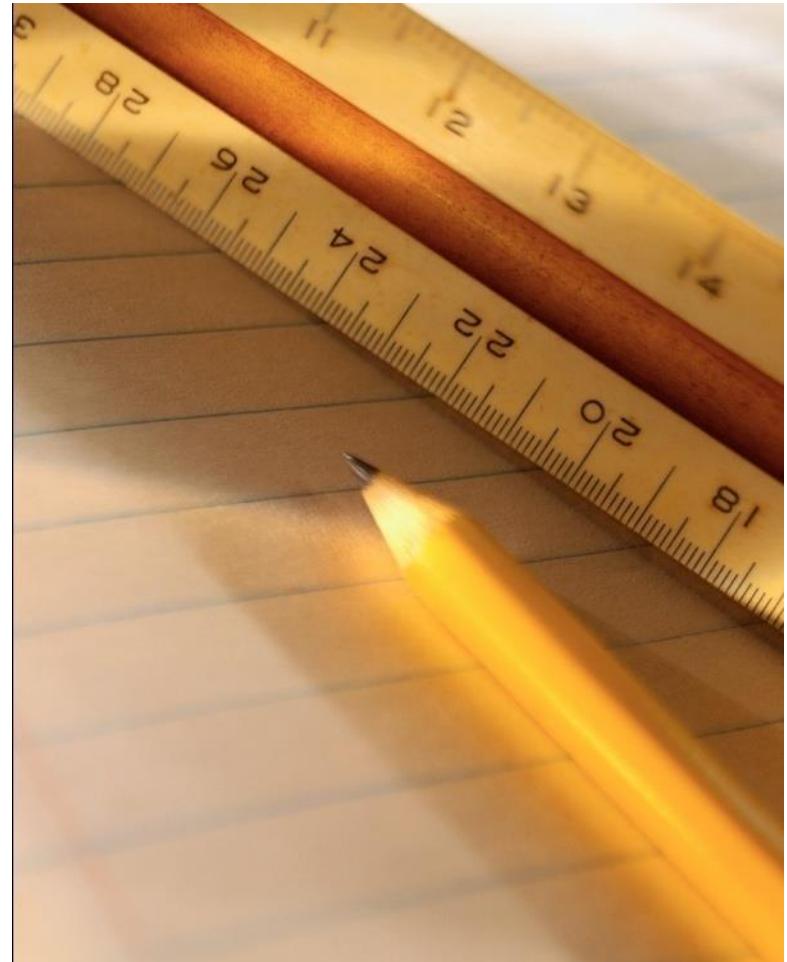
- Overall concept, more abstract
- Broad statement of what you want to accomplish

E.g. To reduce the rate of maternal mortality in Nigeria



Specific Objectives

- S – Specific
- M – Measurable outcomes
- A – Achievable, attainable
- R – Realistic
- T – Time-bound, achievable in a specified time period



Guidelines to writing specific objectives

- Should not be more than 2-3 specific objectives (SO)
- Always give what your expected results will be.
- Structure specific objectives so that SO 1 is not dependent on SO2

Examples:

- 1) To increase by 50% the proportion of pregnant women attended to by skilled birth attendants over 2 years in Akure North LGA of Ondo State; and
- 2) To reduce by 60% the proportion of pregnant women attended to by faith-based maternity providers over 2 years in the LGA

Description of Project Activities

- Should be mapped to the Objectives
- Explain how project will accomplish the objectives
- Discuss ONLY those actions that support an objective
- Fully describe the work to be done in the project

Activities – cont'd

- One or more activities for each objective
- Specify:
 - Who will do them
 - When they will be done
 - How they will be accomplished
 - Why you chose this approach
 - What other methods were available
 - How long each activity will take

Monitoring and Evaluation

- Clear Objectives and Activities leads to an Evaluation Plan—how are you going to know you accomplished what you set out to do?
- Funders want to be able to determine if their money has been well spent.
- How well did the program achieve its **goal**?
- Did the project meet its **objectives**?
- Were project **activities implemented** as planned?
- How effective were the activities in achieving the objectives?

Monitoring and Evaluation – Cont'd

- Clear M&E procedure should be described
- Both process and outcome indicators should be listed
- A log frame that will relate each specific objective with the indicators should ideally be provided
- Clear reporting dates should also be provided

Budget

It's not how much
money you want,
it's how much the
project costs.



Budget Writing strategy

- Ask for what you need to do the work
- Justify requests that are significant or out of the ordinary
- Reviewers emphasize project quality over budget
- Follow sponsor and institutional guidelines and policies
- When in doubt, ask!

Proposal Budget – Cont'd

- ▶ Read the Guidelines!
- ▶ Consider the overall project budget before you begin to develop individual budgets for each year
- ▶ Consider agency **limits**:
 - items they will fund—items they will NOT fund
 - level they will fund—don't propose a budget over the level (it will most likely be rejected)
 - number of years they will fund
- ▶ Outline the budget in the format the agency requests
- ▶ Remember that the grant will not start for probably several months and submit costs accordingly

Budget – Apply the Guidelines!

Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation: “And if you submit a budget that contradicts any of these carefully described guidelines, we will have reason to think of you as a careless reader and thoughtless applicant. This will inevitably be reflected in our estimation of the potential of your scholarship.”



Characteristics of Well-written, Fundable Proposals

- Innovation
- Relevance
- Demonstrated Competence/expertise of PI
- Feasibility Study
- Time Schedule
- Enthusiasm
- Simple Straightforward Language
- Complete Literature Search



Avoid Automatic Rejection

Examples include:

- Formatting issues (going over page, word, or line limits)
- Submitting a proposal over the budget ceiling
- Deadline issues (Online? Do time zones matter? Postmark/receipt?)
- Submitting a proposal outside agency interests

10 Top Reasons for proposal failure

1. Project doesn't address agency priorities
2. Guidelines not followed
3. Not a compelling idea
4. Ideas not clearly presented
5. Methodology appears to be flawed
6. Overuse of jargon
7. Overly ambitious
8. Narrative and budget don't correspond
9. Sloppy presentation
10. The work has already been done



After receiving the grant, what next?

- Proper management of the grant activities in accordance with the proposal
- Constant liaison with the funding agency to promptly report successes as well as challenges
- Ensure proper documentation of all grant activities
- Ensure that narrative and financial reports are submitted to the agency when due
- Ensure branding and dissemination of project successes

Case Study: Women's Health and Action Research Centre (WHARC)

- Established in 1994
- Now one of Nigeria's NGOs, with widespread international linkages
- Has relied solely on donor support, with no funding from the government
- Has the most impressive building owed by any NGO in Nigeria



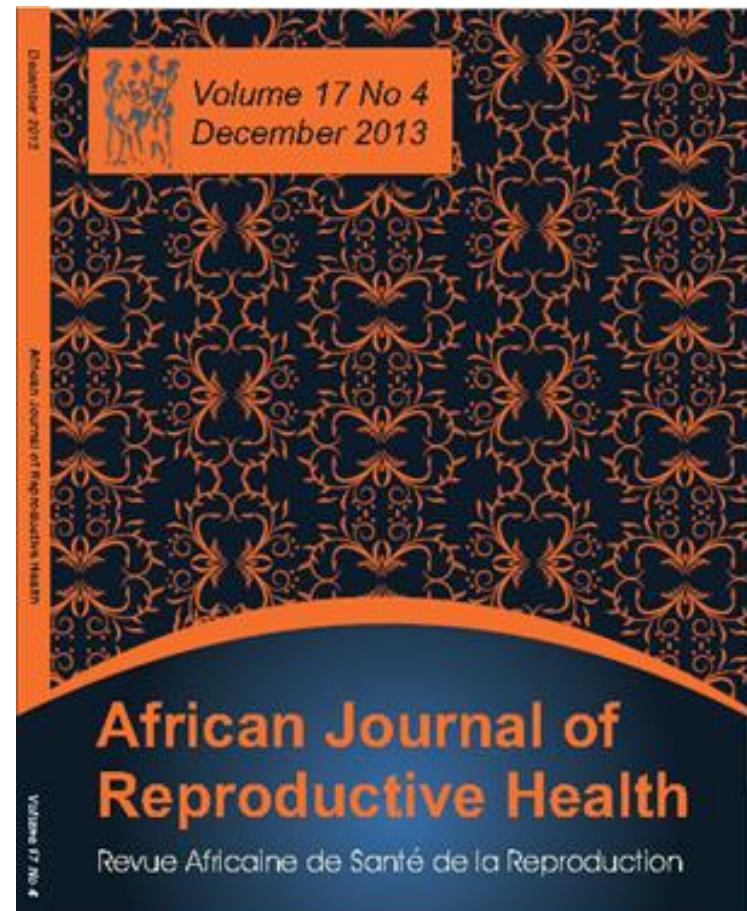
Some of WHARC's Accomplishments

- Received 54 international grants/projects from 1994 to date
- Has been funded by the Ford Foundation, with multiple grants from 1994 to date
- Successes include both solicited and unsolicited grants, including recent competitive grants from WHO, and IPPF



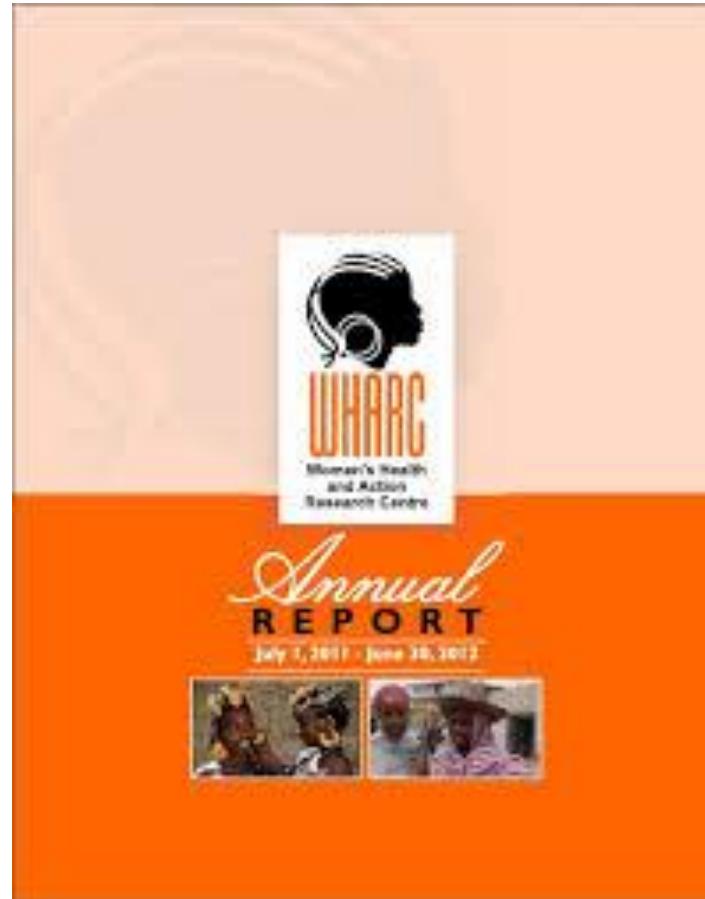
WHARC's Accomplishments – Cont'd

- Africa's leading journal on reproductive health
- Rated by the NUC in 2005 as the best journal in Nigeria that meets international standards
- Established in 1997, has published 4 issues each year without a break
- Indexed in multiple int'l sources and published in 8 websites



Reasons for WHARC Success

- Track record with donors
- Experience and skills in grant writing
- Transparency and Accountability – has annual narrative and financial reports from 1994 to date
- Audits its account annually -1994 to date



Local funding sources for Health/Medical Projects

- TETFUND/NUC
- Local and International NGOs
- Private individuals and Local Foundations
- Government Agencies and Parastatals
- Alumni and related funding sources

International Funding Sources

Bilaterals: USAID, DFID, NORAD,
SIDA, JICA, etc.

Multi-laterals: WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO,
UNIFEM, World Bank, EU, UNDP

Foundations: Gates, Ford, Macarthur,
Kellog, Packard, etc.

Proposal writing resources

website: www.niu.edu/osp

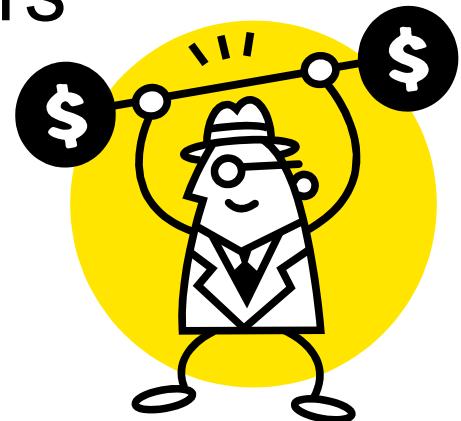
- ▶ Go to the “Proposal Preparation” section and click on *Writing Guides*
 - ▶ Agency Guides
 - ▶ Foundation Center Proposal Writing Short Course
 - ▶ Corporation for Public Broadcasting
 - ▶ Courses and Workshops
 - ▶ a Proposal Writing Seminar at the Foundation Center (includes a free online course)

Popular websites for Grants Writing

- The Foundation Center:
www.fdncenter.org
- Foundations on-line:
www.foundations.org
- The Grantsmanship Center:
www.tgci.com
- Non-profit Resource Center:
www.not-for-profit.org

If your proposal is rejected. . .

- Don't give up!
- Get reviews
- Talk to agency contact
- Re-evaluate, revise and resubmit
- Look for other potential funders



Last notes

- Look at an agencies previous grantees
 - Annual reports
 - Listing on website
 - If requesting a brochure, request a list of previous grantees.
 - Look at others' titles, how much money they were awarded, Abstracts if available.
 - Look at other institutions—where are they receiving money from. Foundations do have geographic restrictions.

THANK YOU

