

## GRANT HELP! Menu (to be posted on QIPSR site)

Here are a few suggestions for thinking about the steps involved in turning your grant idea into an actual proposal. Also, here is a great article, "[Funding, Funding](#)," by Micah Altman, that appeared in PS: Political Science & Politics, 2009, issue 3, that dispels myths about funding and provides excellent advice on writing proposals and targeting funding programs. Also see "[Advice on Writing Proposals to the National Science Foundation](#)," by Susan Finger at Carnegie Mellon University.

1. **First step:** The first step, to quote Altman (2009), is to “develop an original idea for a research project that solves some part of an important problem. (It is better, but not required, when your project involves a clever approach to solving the problem.)” Emphasize what is new. Start by preparing a two-page summary of the proposal idea that you could then share with colleagues or mentors that describes the purpose and the contribution of your proposal as you see it now, realizing of course that the focus will change over time and may be tailored to the funding agency. I’m happy to meet with you early on to provide feedback and direct you to others for advice. **Mentors** in your department are especially useful. Ask people who have received funding to read their proposals, read your proposal, and think about collaborating with someone who has received funding to learn the ropes.
2. **Identify a funding agency:** The next step is to identify a funding agency that is interested in funding research like yours and target a program in the agency interested in solving that problem. This is important because your proposal must be tailored to the specific guidelines and mission of the funding agency. To help you with your search for funding sources, I’d recommend that A&S faculty also meet with one or both of the following people:
  - a. [Sharmi Ray](#) (235 POT) is the A&S college's grants officer who helps with **pre-award assistance**. See the [college's grants officer](#) page for a description of the various ways Sharmi can help you with proposal preparation, such as the development of proposal budgets. In addition, Sharmi can help locate potential **collaborators**, co-investigators or consultants in the university if the grant calls for additional expertise. Examples include possible collaborators in Statistics or Biostatistics. **During the summer**, Sharmi usually has time to help find funding agencies, so the summer is a good time to get more help on proposals. (During the school year, Sharmi is often more focused on helping faculty prepare proposals that are at a later stage of development.)
  - b. [Margot McCullers](#), Director of the Proposal Development **Office**. Margot does a nice job of helping people narrow their search and find funding agencies, but I’ve found it’s important to make an appointment to meet personally with Margot or someone in her office. For example, Margot or her associates can look up proposals that have been funded at UK that are close to yours, and they can ask the author if they mind sharing the proposal.
3. **Write the body of your proposal:** Once you’ve circulated your pre-proposal, refined it somewhat, and have a funding agency in mind, you’ll write the body of your proposal. State the problem clearly, why it’s important, and be sure to convince reviewers that you will complete the project and publish the results. I and others will be happy to read drafts of your proposal to provide feedback. I may not be in your field, but I can provide advice on how to frame the proposal and cover the required sections of the proposal effectively. I can also have the proposal read by others in associated fields that can provide useful feedback. The [Proposal Development Office](#) can also read your proposal to provide feedback about form and framing. Be sure to tailor your proposal to the requirements of the funding agency to the letter!
4. **For the remaining steps of the proposal**, the best advice is to be extremely meticulous in following submission procedures.
5. **Think about when to apply for IRB approval from UK’s [Office of Research Integrity](#).** The best advice is to start your application for IRB approval at least 6 weeks before the proposal deadline, especially if you’re applying during the summer. Timing the IRB application depends on the funding agency, however. All proposals at NSF need prior IRB approval. At NIH, however, you can usually wait to apply for IRB approval once you know the proposal has at least been scored, or wait until NIH asks for approval. That way you don't waste your time getting approval for a project that may not get

funded. If and when you seek IRB approval, seek out someone who has prior experience, and a [staff member](#) at UK's Office of Research Integrity that will answer all your questions. Some staff members are extremely helpful! QIPSR can help field questions about ORI applications.

6. **Contact the Program Officer (PO) at the funding agency.** They can often provide critical information about what kinds of projects they are actually looking for, how to make yours more appealing, and whether you might be better served choosing a different RFA (Request For Application or funding opportunity advertised by the agency). The PO's at NIH, for example, will look at proposal summaries and provide feedback.
7. **Prepare the budget for your proposal.** Again, for A&S faculty, [Sharmi Ray](#) (235 POT) will help you with this.
8. **Prior to submitting your proposal to the [Office of Sponsored Projects Administration](#) (OSPA),** Sharmi Ray in A&S will provide you with a checklist for completing all the parts of the proposal, and review the documents prior to forwarding them to OSPA. A Research Administrator in OSPA will collect the signatures. Usually, OSPA must receive your proposal three business days prior to the funding agency deadline. Of course, faculty need to contact Sharmi well in advance of the proposal deadline to receive assistance.
9. **Other resources:** In February, 2001, QIPSR organized an excellent Grant Workshop, "[An Insider's Guide to Social Science Grants](#)" and we've posted all the videos, PowerPoints and talking points containing advice from top grant experts at UK. **The biggest lesson from the workshop** is that external grant funding is very doable, but you need to follow the guidelines, start early, get help, be persistent and have a thick skin!
10. **What's a reasonable timetable?** Getting started early is always good advice, but so is just getting started, period. Summer is a great time to make progress on proposal writing, but leave yourself plenty of time (3 to 6 mos.) to get started.
11. **How will you benefit? What you can assume:** **1)** You'll get help so the grant writing process won't be onerous, **2)** You'll get some merit credit for applying for external grants if you're an A&S faculty member, **3)** You'll get something out of the proposal writing process, even if you don't receive funding with the first submission, since funding, like publications, often requires more than one submission. The benefits of writing a funding proposal, in addition to getting funded, are many, including: developing new collaborations and new research ideas and publishing "pilot" research – all of which are sure to help you land an external grant! **4)** If you receive funding, you'll be a "made" person on campus, with RAs to do scut work, and original data to publish research that wouldn't be possible without a grant. In addition to the grant, your college and department will receive a portion of the indirect costs. These funds will support research programs (including your own). And, depending on the funding agency, you may be able to budget summer salary and/or course releases during the academic year.

**Note from Mike Bardo, Acting A&S Dean for Research:**

UK is moving toward requiring that PI's complete an [Electronic Internal Approval Form](#) (e-IAF) before the proposal is entirely complete. The e-IAF allows the PI to start the process of getting approval for the proposal (from the Dept. Chair, College Grants Officer, Associate Dean, etc.) once the budget and budget justification is complete but before finishing the "science" of the proposal. Allowing electronic circulation of the approval form makes things easier for everyone involved. It's not yet a requirement but very easy for the PI to complete and get started.