Skills Lab: Grant Writing 101

Dr. Chevis N Shannon

Stephen R Gannon

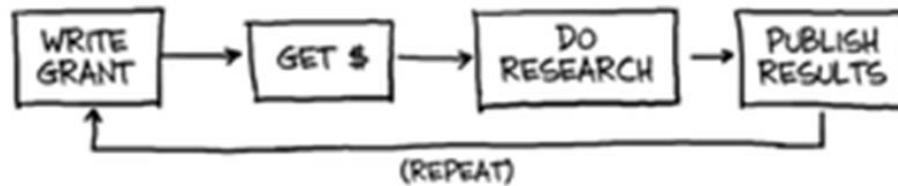*Brittany Lipscomb*

vumc.org/socks

The research grant application process.

Surgical Outcomes Center for Kids (SOCKs)

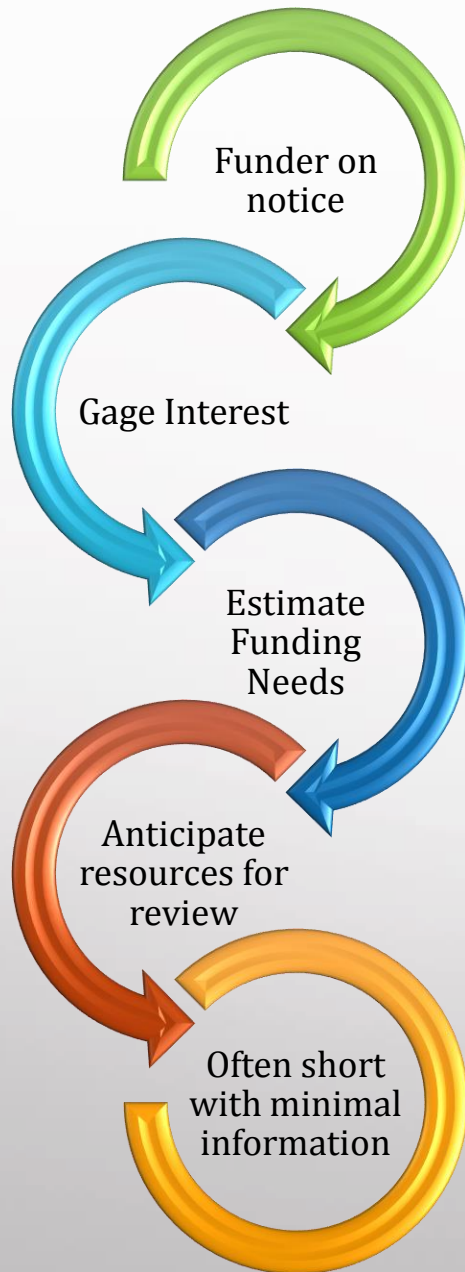# Before you start writing

Questions To Ask Before Writing

- Do they fund the work that I do?

- Do they fund other organizations & projects like mine?
  - Issue, focus area within issue, budget size, collaborators, structure

- Do I know *SPECIFICALLY* what I want this funder to support?

Checklist for Grant Planning

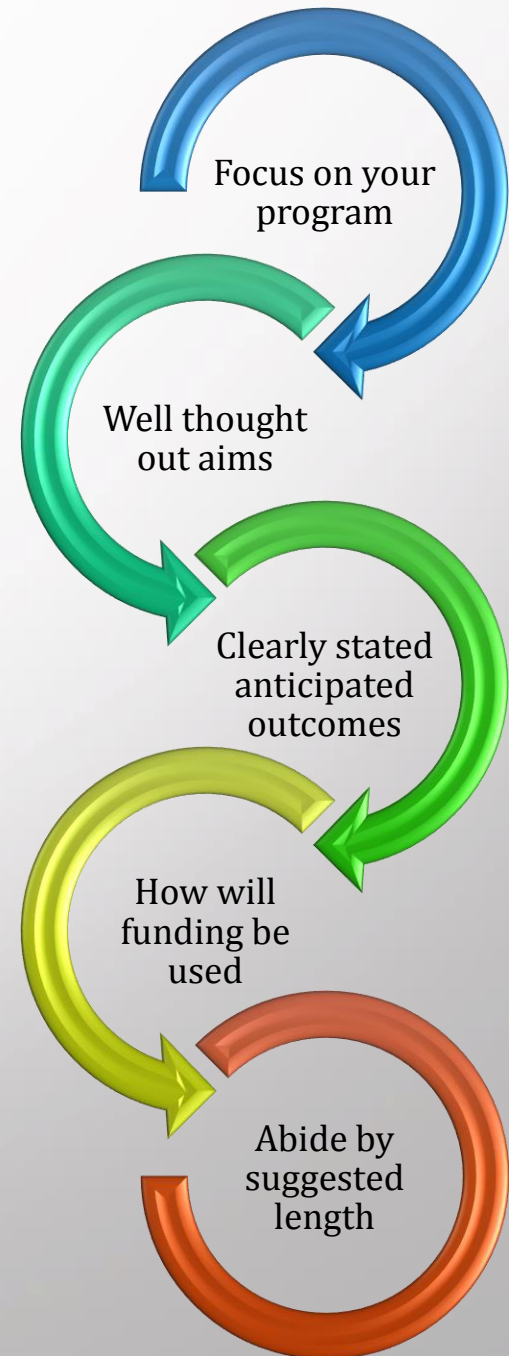❑ Identify Collaborators & Roles

❑ Identify mentor (s) if applicable

❑ Know Your 'Go To' People

❑ Internal vs. External Timeline

❑ Ensure your availability for writing/submission

❑ Identify required internal rates and documentation
   FIRST

Pre-grant

Letter Of Intent

Funder on notice

Gage Interest

Estimate Funding Needs

Anticipate resources for review

Often short with minimal information

Focus on your program

Well thought out aims

Clearly stated anticipated outcomes

How will funding be used

Abide by suggested length

Concept Paper

Concept Paper

- Project Title
- Investigator Names & Affiliations
- Introduction (problem statement)
- Project Description
- Budget (general but can be detailed)
- Contact Information

Project Description

Specific Aims & Hypothesis

Abbreviated Methods & Timeline

Benefits & Anticipated Outcomes

2-3 Page summary of the project you want to propose

Used as a 'weed out' tool- full proposals with invite only

Funding Information

- Gerber Foundation

- Women's HIV Epidemiology Cohort Studies

- Neurosurgery Research & Education Foundation (NREF)

- Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center

- Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

- AMA Foundation

Tips on Writing

Writing a Successful Proposal

- **Follow the rules** in the Call for Proposals. Use 12 point font. Don't include anything not requested in this Call for Proposals.

- **Develop clear goals. Simple and clear goals** let the reviewers know **WHAT** your goal is. Then—as they read your application—they can see **HOW** you are going to reach your goal.

- **Plan ahead on how to accomplish your project.** Think about the details before you fill out the proposal. If you are doing a research project and choose to use an experimental design, make sure the design is capable of yielding conclusive results.

- **Measure your results.** Chances are you are going to measure something. So, whether it is CSF volumes, L1CAM protein markers, uterine diameter, tumor size, medication compliance, etc. make sure that what you are measuring will give you the information you need to tell if you have accomplished your objectives.

- **Timing is everything.** Let the reviewers know **WHEN** you will be doing the things you plan to do. A **detailed** timetable lets them know that you have given this work some thought and that you have a clear idea of the time it will take.

- **Choose cooperators to complement your skills.** Enlist collaborators who have expertise in areas that you don't, they'll help you make your proposal stronger, increasing your funding chances. NOTE: **Pick your collaborators carefully, and ensure their onboard and ready to work.**
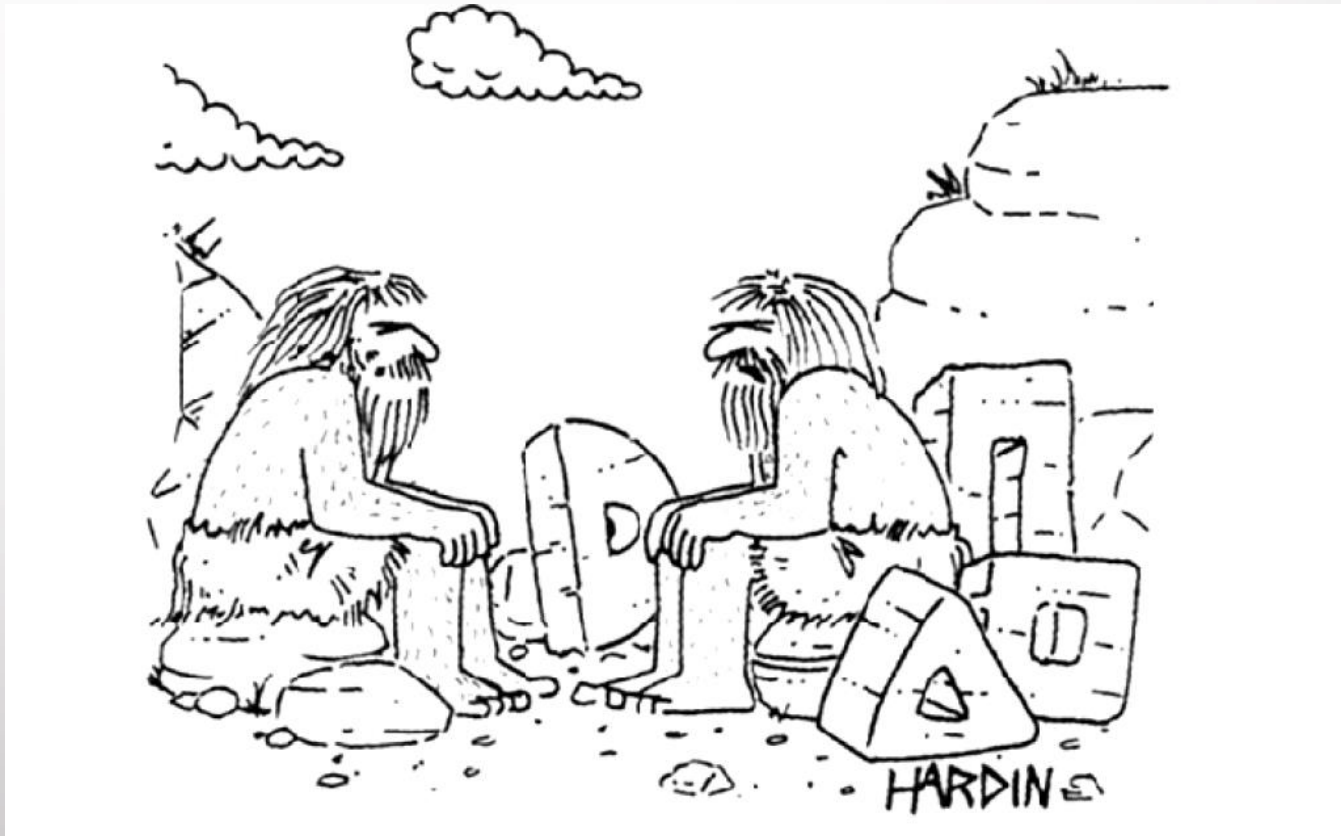
Guidelines and Formatting

Proof Reading Tips

- Edit sections as you go vs. Compile the entire grant first

- Team proof the final grant

- Read it aloud (know your typical mistakes)

- Don't use jargon unless necessary

- Don't use 20 words if 12 will do!

- Proof titles separately

- **READ AND REREAD THE GUIDELINES**

Let's Talk Money

Budgeting....Be Realistic

"I was close to a breakthrough when the grant money ran out."

BUDGET & JUSTIFICATION

Getting Started

Review the budget guidelines from the funder

Outline the project needs

Meet with your mentor & department administrator or grants manager

Finalize the timeline for internal approval

What to Include

Direct Costs: Personnel, Travel, Supplies, Publication, Consultants, Subcontracts, & Participant Support

Indirect Costs: Facilities & Administrative (F&A) costs (space, utilities, & operational expenses)

Project Budget

Justification/Narrative

Fully explains each of the costs contained in the budget spreadsheet, including pay rates and the costs of individual items or activities.

Helpful Tips

Use a spreadsheet with formulas

Know what the allowable expenses are(n't)

Have your mentor/colleague review

Budget Justification

Budget Justification for Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital

It is estimated that 5 patients will be enrolled each year at Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital over a period of 4 years for a total of 20 enrolled patients.

- **Site Co-Investigator:** Dr. Jim Teacher will serve as the Site Investigator for this project, devoting 0.24 calendar months per year. He will be responsible for oversight of site specific study participant recruitment, tracking, data collection, and follow-up retention efforts. Dr. Teacher will also be responsible for all regulatory requirements and for assessing and reporting any adverse events that may occur at their site.

- **Site Lead Neuropsychologist**: At each site, a lead neuropsychologist will oversee the day-to-day assessments of neuropsychological testing of the study participants, devoting approximately 0.24 calendar months per year.

- **Travel:** Annual network meetings will be used for training, study management, and review of recruitment and retention. The budget includes $1500 each year in travel costs for the site clinical research coordinator to attend the meeting. In the first year the budget also includes $1500 in travel costs for the site lead neuropsychologist to attend the meeting for initial study training.

- **Equipment:** Funds are requested to purchase two computers. There will be one on the clinical side at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital for storing data and imaging studies, analyzing imaging, and reviewing imaging acquisition ($5,000). An additional monitor will be needed for this desktop computer to allow for side by side comparison of studies ($2,000). A laptop computer will be used for analyzing studies when away from the desktop workstation, reviewing with clinicians, and presentation purposes at conferences ($5,000). Software for analyses and presentation preparation will be required on the computers ($2,000).

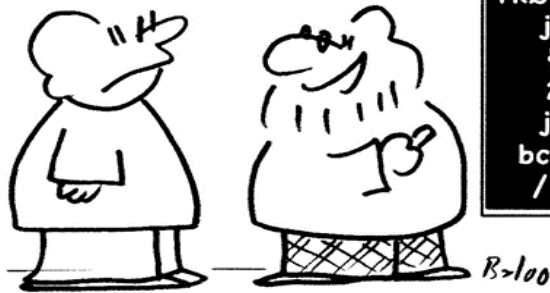| Budget Template	Period 1	Period 2	TOTALS
Salaries/Wages			
Faculty	$ -	$ -	$ -
Staff	$ -	$ -	$ -
Student	$ -	$ -	$ -
Fringe Benefits	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL PERSONNEL COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -
Equipment	$ -	$ -	$ -
Travel	$ -	$ -	$ -
Participant Costs			
Stipends	$ -	$ -	$ -
Participant Travel	$ -	$ -	$ -
Subsistence	$ -	$ -	$ -
Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
Subaward Costs	$ -	$ -	$ -
Other Costs			
Materials/Supplies	$ -	$ -	$ -
Publications	$ -	$ -	$ -
Consultants	$ -	$ -	$ -
Maintenance	$ -	$ -	$ -
Tuition	$ -	$ -	$ -
Other	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL NON-PERSONNEL COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL DIRECT COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -
F&A COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -
TOTAL PROJECT COSTS	$ -	$ -	$ -

Let's Really Talk Money

Finding Funding- Internal
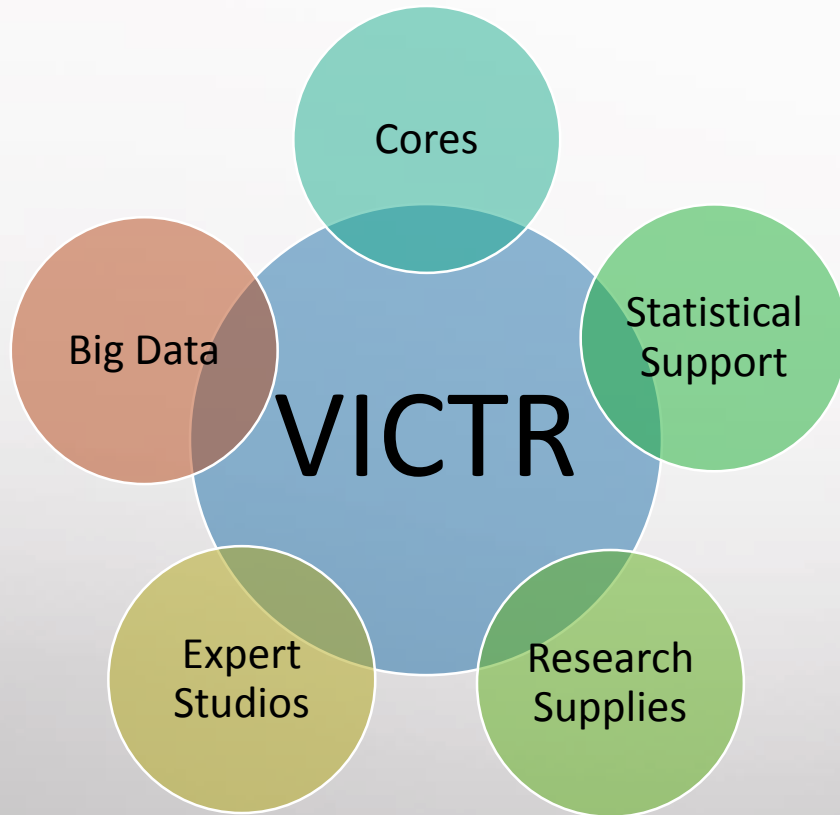
- Monthly funding overviews held
- Support not to exceed $12,000/year
- Max overall total: $36,000 over 3 years
- Special considerations – small equipment (<$5,000), software

NOT fundable

- Salary support
- Animal purchase, housing, food
- Travel, publication fees
- Computer equipment
- Services outside Vanderbilt or MMC

Success & Failure

Response & Final Determination

"It's a foolproof formula for writing grant applications."
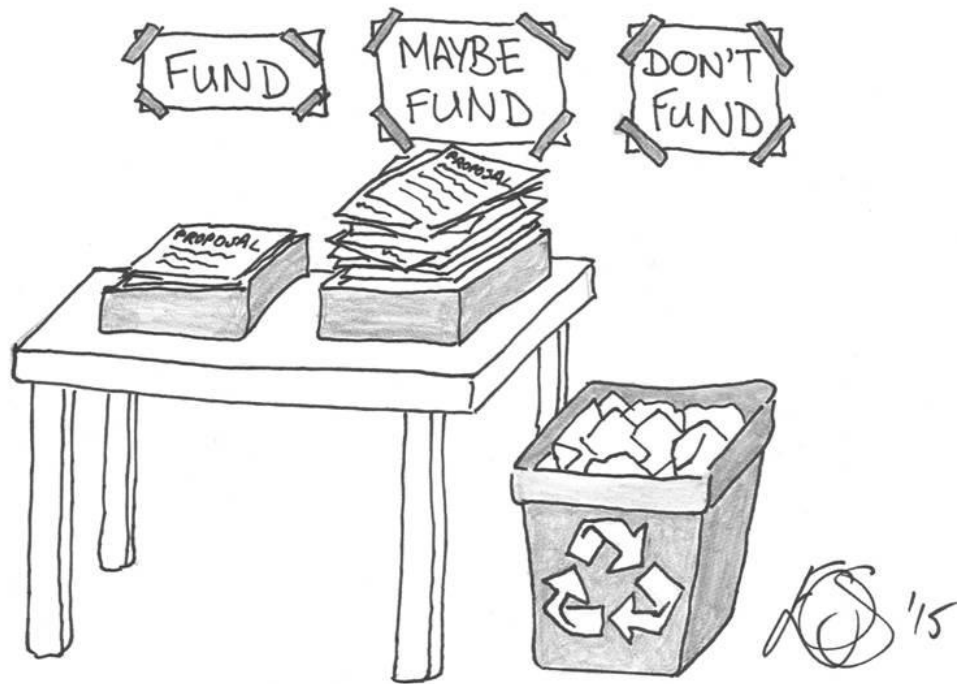
Awards & Rejections

If You Get Funded

- Follow communication, budgeting and reporting requirements to the letter

- Over communicate!

If You Don't Get Funded

- Understand why, read summary sheets

- Maintain & build on relationship

- Resubmit during the next funding cycle if the opportunity arises

Reasons Grants are Declined

Review panel categories.

Most Common Reasons Grants are Declined

The organization does not meet our priorities

The organization is not located in our geographic area of funding

The proposal does not follow our prescribed format

The proposal is poorly written and difficult to understand

The proposed budget and grant request is not within our funding range

The project impact isn't clear

The objectives of the project do not justify the budget and

The timeline for project objectives isn't attainable

We've allocated all the money for this grant cycle

There is insufficient proof the program is sustainable beyond our funding

QUESTIONS?

The best way to learn how to write a successfully funded grant is to write, write, write, and submit, submit, submit