Stepping Outside of Your Comfort Zone: Applying to Different Funding Agencies
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PI Approaches to Getting Funded

The One-Shot PI: AKA Chasing a Singular Opportunity

![Image of a character running through a lush landscape]
PI Approaches to Getting Funded

The Single-Minded PI: AKA Hyperfocusing on a Single Funder
PI Approaches to Getting Funded

The Single-Minded PI: AKA Hyperfocusing on a Single Funder
The Diversifying PI: AKA Shopping an Idea to Multiple Prospective Funders
How can RDPs give PIs a nudge in the right direction?
Help them...

1. Find the right opportunity
2. Adapt their ideas for different funders
3. Refine their teams to meet different needs
4. Refine their pitch and language for different reviewers
Helping PIs Find the Right Opportunity

• Option 1: Direct them to different agencies

• Option 2: Direct them to jointly-sponsored funding opportunities
Diversifying Example 1: AHRQ R18 Patient Safety Learning Lab

• Uses a systems engineering approach to improve patient safety

• Teams have included systems engineers, clinicians, computer scientists and the those from the visual arts

• $625,000 over 4 years

• Applications due in early spring
Diversifying Example 2: NSF LEAP HI

- Funds engineering approaches to address challenges for advancing America’s prosperity, health and infrastructure
- Five years, with total budget between $1 million and $2 million.
- Research teams have included engineers, economists, and chemists
- Applications due in September with LOIs due in July
Diversifying Example 3: NSF/NIH SMART AND CONNECTED HEALTH

- Supports breakthrough ideas in healthcare (networking, pervasive computing, advanced analytics, and system and process modeling)
- $300,000 per year for up to four years;
- Research teams have included physicians, computer scientists, engineers, and social psychologists
- Applications normally due in December
Helping PIs Adapt Ideas for Different Funders

• **Challenge 1**: Understanding Funder Expectations

• **Challenge 2**: Understanding Differences in Funder Processes

• **Challenge 3**: Understanding Differences in Funder Proposal Structure
Funder Expectations

• Level of agency engagement in project design / execution
• Relevance to agency mission
• Relevance to agency priorities
• Preferences for project types, team composition, etc.
Funder Processes

- Engagement with program officers
- Pre-proposals vs. full proposals
- Submission cycles
- Recurring calls vs. one-time opportunities
- Internal vs. external review
• Always seek out examples
• Follow solicitations and related guidance exactly
• Ask questions when guidance is not clear
• Ask experienced awardees or SPOs to review for compliance
Helping PIs Select the Right Team
Speaking to New Reviewers

- Understand who will review the proposal
- Tailor language to match their expertise and expectations
- Tailor the project focus to match their expectations
- Present methods with the reviewers in mind
- Consider whether the “usual” citations are appropriate
Successful Journeys: PCORI to NIH

Proposal originally written for PCORI Pragmatic and Clinical Studies

Reworked for NIH UG3/UH3

Required Several Changes
- Different Partners
- Different Methods
- Different Randomized Control Trial Structure
Choosing Different Partners
Switched from Eastern Massachusetts-Based Academic Medical Center and CHCs to Larger Multi-State Health System
Choosing Different Methods

Changed from

• QI Methods (Benchmarking, Process Mapping)

Changed to

• human factors and workflow analyses, failure modes effects analysis, reliability engineering, computer simulation models
Choosing RCT Design

Changed from

- Parallel Cluster RCT

Changed to

- Stepped Wedge RCT
Successful Journeys: NIH to USDA

Proposal originally written as an NIH R01

Reworked for USDA (NIFA) AFRI

Required several changes:
• Reframed the research question
• Revised the team
• Revised and restructured the approach
Reframing the Question

Reframed from

“how do dietary behaviors and the home environment influence obesity in children?”

to

“how does the home environment affect the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables among children at risk for obesity?”
Revising the Team

Added

- Dietitian
- Health Economist

Adjusted Responsibilities

- Biostatistician
Revising the Approach

Reducing the Scope
Budget changed from $2.5M to $1M

Restructuring the Application
• Change from 12 to 18 pages
• Change from Significance, Innovation, and Approach to a Structured Outline of Required Information
• Addition of Multiple Required Documents
Most PIs Can’t Make this Journey Without You!