

Strategies for Success Seeking External Support

-- From the Perspective of a Writer
and a Writing Coach

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Grant Writing is a Rhetorical Exercise

- ▀ redērik
- ▀ the art of effective or persuasive speaking or writing, especially the use of figures of speech and other compositional techniques.
- ▀ no hands, body language, or other flirtatious techniques are available

To the Writer: Understand the Sequence and the Task – Write to the First Audience

- ▀ Get Discussed – Don't Get Streamlined

So Recognize:

- ▀ The First Audience is just Three Reviewers
 - Think about who they might be
 - Direct your writing to them
 - Leave your ego at home

Writing for the First Audience

- ▀ Program Officers are not the first audience
- ▀ Know Institute Priorities
- ▀ Understand Foci of Program Announcements
- ▀ Remind the first audience of the priorities and announcement focus – individual reviewers may not check
- ▀ If "New and Early Stage," say so
- ▀ Check Study Section Roster
- ▀ Don't Offend the Fairy Godmother

Consider the Reviewer

- ▀ Not in it for the big bucks
- ▀ Believes in good science and stewardship of scarce resources
- ▀ Is an expert – in something
- ▀ Is inevitably idiosyncratic
- ▀ Is not "out to get you"

The Targets for the Reviewer's Reaction:

- ▀ "Now, that's important!"
- ▀ "This'll really move the needle"
- ▀ "This matters!"
- ▀ Getting a "No-Blink Read"

“Now That’s Important” [Significance]

- Addresses a Meaningful Problem
 - Size matters, but so does effect (big effect on a small prevalence issue – e.g. peripartum cardiomyopathy)
- Focused on a Recognized Priority Area
 - or the relation to a priority area can be established
- Is Credible and Feasible, given the Approach

[and cited my work]

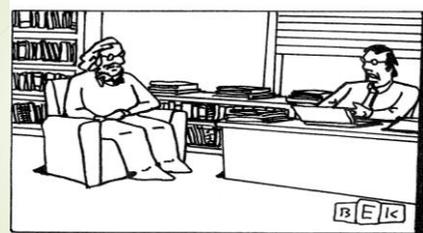
Moving the Needle [Innovation]

- Novel and Imaginative in some way:
- NOT: Another application of a well-established treatment [“Oh, no, not another (fill in the blank – app, novel use of ibuprophen, etc.)”]
- NOT: Another spin on the work of a well-known, well-established researcher

“This Matters” [IMPACT]

- The Return on Investment Criterion
 - So What?
 - This Matters!
- This is the Key Score
 - Will the application get to the table?
 - Will the application make it to Council?
 - Does the application merit support by the Institute?

Not the Desired Response on Impact



With
Apologies to
The New Yorker

“I’m sorry—you tapped into something no one cares about.”

A “No-Blink” Read – Do not Produce Distrust or Suspicion

Assure Perfect Alignment

- If you hang an idea on the wall in the first act (Aims), you’d better cock and fire it in the second and third acts (Significance and Approach)

[Mention maternal/infant interaction in an Aim; provide background on it in Significance; provide a measure for it and analyze it in Approach]

- Keep the numbers straight throughout

[sample size; number of sites; data collection times; etc.]

- Attend to all the Parts

[how will you: Recruit that many subjects – with all those exclusions – from just three Minute Clinics? . . . Monitor intervention faithfully? . . . Resolve interpretive differences? . . . Measure X, Y, or Z? . . . Analyze Aim 3?]

Can Someone Please read for coherence and consistency

My Favorite Hobby Horse: The Writing Itself – the ARRRGH! Moment

- Principle Investigator
- . . . the data shows . . .
- . . . the first criteria is
- . . . after three eeks we willgather samples again.
- Loneliness, depression, and anxiety among this population is prevalent
- I’m going to be really, really sure you understand this key and essential point, so I’ll say it three times and **emphasize** it wherever possible.

The Writing Itself

If these or similar writing problems occur in an NRSA (or even a K01 or K99/R00) application – that's on the Mentor, and my score for Sponsors – and my overall score – will reflect that.

Why the Writing Itself Matters?

If s/he can't get these things right in the proposal, how can we believe s/he'll be able to carry out this project?

The Pillars of Success

- Leadership
- Infrastructure
- Individual Scholarship and Craft

Leadership: The Role of the Dean

Climate Control

- Externally Supported Scholarship is a Priority (to the extent that it is)
- Importance of Success is Reflected in the School's Disseminated Strategic Plan
- Made Clear as a Priority in Recruiting and Appointment Letters
- Demonstrated in Rewards and Recognition
- Embodied in Appropriate Support

Infrastructure – Supportive Environment for Concentrating on the Science

- Mentoring
- Individualized Help (PRN)
 - Consultation (design; methods; analysis)
 - Writing Support (Coaching; Editing)
- Mock Review
- Budget Development
- "Stuff" – biosketches; references; boilerplate
- Grant Submission (Cayuse; grants.gov)
- Post-award budget reports and management

Individual Scholarship and Craft – The Roles of the Search Committee and Associate Deans

- Hire Strategically:
 - Training and Track Record provide evidence a candidate can succeed in this competitive world
 - Candidate's area fits with the environment
- Facilitate Success
 - Introduce to colleagues across disciplines
 - Enlist onto successful teams
- Be Kind, but Honest
 - a "Not Scored" (or not funded) result is a coaching opportunity
 - Tenure and promotion review can offer meaningful direction