

*Strategies for Obtaining
Funds from Government
Agencies and Other
Organizations*

Thomas J. Baerwald

Senior Science Advisor

Geography and Spatial Sciences Program Director

National Science Foundation

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Why Do You Want to Obtain Funding?

- Good reasons
 - You need resources to pursue an exciting line of research, improve your teaching, or do something else worthwhile.
 - Project-specific items, such as time, staff, supplies, travel costs
 - Longer-term infrastructure such as equipment
 - You want to take advantage of special opportunities when funder interests align with your expertise.
- Dubious reasons
 - You want prestige.
 - A "higher power" said it would be nice if you did so.

Determine What You Need

- Identify your goals
 - Advance basic understanding?
 - Address specific practical problems?
 - Enhance your teaching?
- Identify what's needed to accomplish the goals
 - Identify resources that must be obtained
 - Identify resources that you'd like to have but that aren't essential

Identify Possible Funders

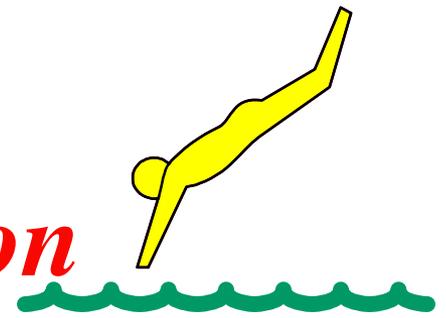
- Government agencies
 - NSF (focusing on basic scientific research)
 - Federal "mission agencies" (focusing on advancing knowledge using agency resources and addressing agency-specific problems)
 - State and local agencies (addressing specific, locally oriented problems)
- Private firms, non-profit organizations, and foundations
 - Interests will focus on specific organization goals, such as improving products or services or addressing specific or local problems or topics

Match Your Interests with Those of the Funder

An NSF example....

- Recognize that NSF values generalizable scientific understanding that broadens conceptual perspectives and enhances theory.
- Identify research communities that will value new knowledge you will generate and consider the journals in which you expect to share your findings.
- "Map" those communities against NSF programs and competitions.
- Send a prospectus to the program officers of the programs and competitions you think best align to determine whether your assessment is accurate.

Obtaining Funding Is Like Entering a Diving Competition



Your chances of success are best if you:

- Learn the rules of the competition.
- Learn which entries receive the highest marks.
- Learn how the competition is organized.
- Hone your skills and correct your defects.
- Take care to do your best.
- Realize that how you place will also depend on how well other competitors do.

How Do You Learn the Rules?

- Check websites of the funding organization
- Access and read relevant documents
 - At NSF, such documents include *PAPPG* and competition-specific solicitations.
- Determine whether pre-submission contact with organization staff members is permitted or encouraged
 - If so, contact relevant staffers with a prospectus and/or questions if needed, but make sure you've already "done your homework."

How Do You Try to Earn the Highest Marks?

- Identify the funder's goals and review criteria used to make funding decisions.
- Do all that you can to ensure that your proposed work will help meet the funder's goals and match up positively with the review criteria.
- Be explicit in showing how your work will match up with what the funder wants to result.
- But don't overreach. If your work won't accomplish what the funder wants, look elsewhere.

How Do You Learn How a Competition Is Organized?

- Get relevant information
 - Check the website.
 - Read the solicitation and other relevant documents.
 - Ask informed questions of the organization's program officers.
- Try to understand who will review and make decisions about your proposal, and write the proposal to speak directly to them within the framework of the review criteria.

How Do You Hone Skills, Correct Defects, and Do Your Best?

- Give yourself lots of time
 - Do preliminary work months before the deadline.
 - Draft the proposal and ask others to read and comment on it at least four weeks before the deadline.
 - Revisit the proposal after you've had time away two weeks before the deadline.
 - Comply completely with proposal-preparation requirements. If you're uncertain, ask well before the deadline.
- Get feedback from others
 - Ask them to be totally open and honest.

What Does the Fact You're Competing for Funds Mean?

- Others are trying to make the case for their work
 - You have no control over what they do.
 - You can do everything right, attain a personal best, and still finish out of the money.
- You control your own proposal, so make it as strong and compelling as possible.
- Don't interpret a decline as evidence you can't be funded in future versions of this competition or in other competitions.

Other General Thoughts

- Recognize that each funder is different.
 - Never submit the same proposal to multiple funders.
 - Even if funders have very similar interests, be sure to craft each proposal for that specific funder.
- Be persistent.
 - Remember the words of Christopher Morley:
*"Big shots are just little shots
who keep shooting!"*

What Should You Do If You're Successful in Obtaining Funds?

- Comply with all requirements.
 - Learn from the funders what specific terms govern all aspects of your award.
 - Make sure that funds are managed properly, and submit reports and other required items on or before the due date.
- Find out from the funder what additional information it needs in addition to formal requirements.
 - Don't spring surprises on the funder unless you are surprised yourself.



To paraphrase a comment by hockey great Wayne Gretzky...
You don't score goals on shots you don't take.

Contact Information

Thomas Baerwald

tbaerwal@nsf.gov

703-292-7301

Geography and Spatial Sciences
(GSS) Program

National Science Foundation

2415 Eisenhower Ave.

Alexandria VA 22314 U.S.A.

Other GSS Program Directors:

Antoinette WinklerPrins; anwinkle@nsf.gov; 2703-292-7266

Jacqueline Vadjunec; jmvadjun@nsf.gov; 703-292-7064

Use gss-info@nsf.gov to contact all current NSF GSS program directors using a single e-mail address.