PREPARE WINNING PROPOSALS
A Grant Writing Blueprint

Please sign-in and provide contact information to receive a copy of the presentation, templates, other materials, and future notifications.
Presenter Introduction

Joshua M. Simmons, Prosper Sustainably

- Principal Consultant/Attorney, Founding President
- Former SYCEO Director (2007 – 2014)
  - Santa Ynez Chumash Environmental Office
    - Developed strategic planning and management systems

Relevant Experience

- Prepared 50+ proposals securing over $5,000,000 in funding
- In-Person Grant Writing Trainings
  - FWS Workshop, BOR Workshop, TLEF, EPA R9 Annual Conferences
- Online Grant Writing Webinars
Workshop Agenda

- Participant Introductions
- Finding Funding Opportunities
- Reviewing Funding Opportunities
- Prepare a Proposal Writing Plan
- Drafting the Narrative
- Crafting the Work Plan
- Building the Budget
- Securing Letters of Support
- Compiling and Submitting the Proposal
- Increasing Odds Pre-FOA
- Conclusion
Participant Introductions

- Name
- Position
- Tribe / Organization
- What is your biggest grant writing challenge?
- What do you want to learn today?
Understanding Funding Opportunities

- **RFP = Request for Proposals**
- **FOA = Funding Opportunity Announcement**
Finding Funding Opportunities

How do you find funding opportunities?

- Write down sources
- Share sources with group
Finding Funding Opportunities

- **Federal Funding Opportunities**
  - Grants.gov
  - Agency websites
  - Email lists

- **State and Local Government Funding Opportunities**
  - Agency websites
  - Email lists

- **Non-Governmental Organization Funding Opportunities**
  - NGO websites
  - Email lists
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

Why should you review the full funding opportunity announcement *thoroughly* before you decide to apply for a grant?
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

Why should you review the full funding opportunity announcement thoroughly before you decide to apply for a grant?

- How much funding is available?
- How much competition will there be?
- Are you eligible for the funding?
- How much effort will it take to prepare a proposal?
- How competitive will your potential project be?
- Extract key information – Use FOA Review Template
- Make sure you don’t overlook anything important
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

What information should you extract from a funding opportunity announcement?
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

What information should you extract?

- Funding Opportunity Title & Identifiers
- Funding Opportunity Announcement Doc(s) and Link(s)
- Application Deadline
- Available Funding (Total / Minimum / Maximum)
- Cost-Sharing / Match Requirements
- Funding Period (Length, Start, End)
- Eligible Organization(s) and Location(s)
- Eligible (Grant Project) Activities
- Proposal Formatting Requirements
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

What information should you extract?

- Project/Proposal Requirements and Restrictions
- Required Proposal/Application Components
- Project/Proposal Criteria
- Submission Options
- Application Contact & Assistance
- List of Priority Tasks and Information/Data Needs
- Additional Notes
- Questions
- Work Plan Outline / Specific Project Ideas
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

- Grant Announcement Review Template
- Grant Announcement Review Example
Prepare a Proposal Writing Plan

Why prepare a proposal writing plan?

What information should the proposal writing plan include?
Preparing a Proposal Writing Plan

Why prepare a proposal writing plan?

- Identify and track proposal requirements
- Identify and track needed info, data, and documents
  - Gathering info, data, and docs is a significant part of the process
- Allocate people, time, and other resources

What information should the proposal writing plan include?

- Proposal components and requirements
  - Including needed information and documents
- Timeframes and responsibilities
- Evaluation criteria
Using a Proposal Writing Plan

How should you use the proposal writing plan?
Using a Proposal Writing Plan

How should you use the proposal writing plan?

- Manage proposal preparation personnel, timeframe, and other resources
  - Review with responsible people regularly

- Track progress in obtaining needed information, data, and documents

- Track progress in completing required proposal components

- Periodically evaluate project and proposal against evaluation criteria
  - Estimate proposal score and try to improve areas of weakness
Reviewing Funding Opportunities

- Proposal Writing Plan Template
- Proposal Writing Plan Example
Drafting the Narrative

What sections are commonly required in a proposal narrative?

How do you approach drafting a proposal narrative? What steps do you take?
Drafting the Narrative

What sections are commonly required in a narrative?

- **Background Information**
  - Applicant Organization, Community, Geography, etc.
- **Description of the Problem / Need**
- **Goal(s) (project, organizational, community)**
- **Objective(s)**
- **Expect Outcomes / Benefits**
- **Approach / Work Plan**
- **Timeline**
Drafting the Narrative

What sections are commonly required in a narrative?

- Budget (narrative, table)*
- Roles and Responsibilities (including partnerships)
- Capabilities (organizational, staff, partners, etc.)
- Current Efforts / Past Efforts & Success
- Performance Measures, Performance Measurement
- Anticipated Obstacles and Contingency Plans
- Post-Project Strategy / Project Sustainability / Future Plans
Drafting the Narrative

How do you approach drafting a proposal narrative?

- Prepare an outline based on the FOA requirements
  - Consider temporarily copying relevant FOA language into outline
- Gather supporting information and data
- Draft each section (one at a time)
- Review and edit each section (one at a time)
  - Cross check supporting proposal documents / components
- Review, edit, and finalize full proposal
Drafting the Narrative

Example Proposal Narrative
Crafting the Work Plan

What elements are commonly part of the proposal work plan?

How do you approach crafting a proposal work plan? What steps do you take?
Crafting the Work Plan

What elements are commonly part of the proposal work plan?

- Objectives / Components
- Tasks / Commitments
- Outputs / Deliverables
- Timeline
- Responsible Person(s)
- Staff Work Years
- Outcomes
- Performance Measurement
- Budget
Crafting the Work Plan

How do you approach crafting a proposal work plan?

- Prepare in a table or the required format
  - A narrative description of the approach may also be required
- Create framework of objectives/components
- List sequence of tasks/commitments
  - For each objective/component)
- Determine outputs/deliverables, timeline, responsibilities, work years, budget, etc. for each task/commitment
  - Some of these may be required at the objective/component level
Crafting the Work Plan

How do you approach crafting a proposal work plan?

- Prepare in a table or the required format
  - A narrative description of the approach may also be required
- Create framework of objectives/components
- Identify and list sequence of tasks/commitments
  - For each objective/component
- Determine outputs/deliverables, timeline, responsibilities, work years, budget, etc. for each task/commitment
  - Some of these may be required at the objective/component level
- Prepare the work plan before the narrative and budget
Crafting the Work Plan

- Example Proposal Work Plan
Building the Budget

What are common budget categories?

How do you approach preparing the proposal budget?
What are common budget categories?

- Personnel
- Fringe Benefits
- Travel
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Contractual
- Construction
- Other
- Indirect Costs
- Direct Costs

- Administrative and legal
- Land, structures, rights-of-way, appraisals, etc.
- Relocation expenses and payments
- Architectural and engineering fees
- Other architectural and engineering fees
- Project inspection fees
- Site work
- Demolition and removal
- Construction
- Equipment
- Miscellaneous
- Contingencies
Building the Budget

How do you approach preparing the proposal budget?

- Start with a funding target OR build budget from ground up
- Select budget categories (in accordance with FOA)
- Identify and list items for each budget category
  - Separate by year, obj/comp, and/or task/commitment as required
  - Determine balance between specificity and flexibility (as allowed)
- Determine the cost for each item (and multiply by the amount)
  - Obtain rates, quotes, and other cost information
  - Determine balance between specificity and flexibility (as allowed)
Building the Budget

How do you approach preparing the proposal budget?

- Initially prepare and adjust in a spreadsheet
- Prepare the budget narrative (after *almost* finalized)
  - Determine balance between specificity and flexibility (as allowed)
- Insert figures into required main budget table(s)
- Insert figures into form(s), and/or work plan as required
- Prepare the budget after the work plan
- May need to determine **total** budget amount early in the process
  - For resolutions, SF-424 (signed), and/or other time sensitive docs etc.
Building the Budget

- Example Budget Table
- Example SF-424A
- Example Budget Narrative
- Example Work Plan with Budget
Securing Letters of Support

Why should you secure letters of support, from who, and how many?

How do you approach securing letters of support?

What should a letter of support contain?
Securing Letters of Support

Why secure letters of support, from who, and how many?

- Demonstrate necessary and/or broad commitment to project
- Gain project buy-in (useful for implementation if funded)
- Maximize proposal score (for collaboration criteria and beyond)
- Secure LOS from potential partners that will have a role:
  - Other departments, external agencies, experts, nonprofits, universities, etc.
  - May want LOS from person/party that will benefit from proposed project
- Secure 3+ letters (if possible and appropriate)
  - Letters of support/commitment may be required
Securing Letters of Support

How do you approach securing letters of support?

- Request from potential partner (by phone or in person)
  - Offer to prepare and forward a draft that they can modify
  - Ask that it be signed by highest level person in organization
  - State when you will provide draft; State when LOS is needed by
    - Confirm that they can provide and within the timeframe needed

- Draft and forward one page letter of support

- Repeat with each potential partner
  - Can use the same structure and similar language for each draft LOS

- Begin this process ASAP to allow sufficient time for partners
Securing Letters of Support

What should a letter of support contain?

- **Name and brief description of partner/partner organization**
  - Describe purpose, function, or expertise that relates to proposed project

- **Brief description of specific support to be provided**
  - *Or nature of support if person/organization that will benefit*

- **Statement of support for funding applicant and proposed project**
  - Include the year and title of the FOA

- **Date of letter; Name and title of signer; Signature**

- **Description of resources to be committed (if required)**
  - *E.g. time, money, equipment, supplies, services, etc.*
Securing Letters of Support

➢ Sample Letter of Support
Compiling and Submitting the Proposal

What other documents or parts may you want to or need to include in a proposal?
Compiling and Submitting the Proposal

What other docs/parts may you want/need to include in a proposal?

Do not include anything not mentioned in the FOA

- Cover Letter
- Abstract/Summary
- Table of Contents
- Authorization (e.g. resolution)
- Standard Forms
- Cost-Share Documentation
- Indirect Cost Rate Agreement
- Gantt Chart
- Organizational Chart(s)
- Financial Statement(s)
- Contracts / Sample RFP
- Engineering Documents
- Permits and/or Approvals
- Financial Controls

**THIS LIST IS NOT EXHAUSTIVE**
Compiling and Submitting the Proposal

- Example of complete submission
Compiling and Submitting the Proposal

EXTRA CREDIT: What should you always do after an award decision is made by the funder, regardless of whether you were awarded the funding?

- Request reviewer scores and comments, and other feedback
  - Schedule a call with the funder, if possible

- Find out
  - What are the strengths of the proposal?
  - Where could the proposal have been improved?
  - Is the funding opportunity recurring?

- This feedback will help in preparing future proposals
  - These are the best learning opportunities
Increase Funding Odds Pre-FOA

What can you do to increase your odds of receiving funding pre-Funding Opportunity Announcement?
Increase Funding Odds Pre-FOA

What can you do to increase your odds of receiving funding pre-FOA?

- Build positive relationships with potential funders
- Review potential project ideas with potential funders
- Ask the funder questions about project scope preferences
- Develop and maintain a strategic plan
  - Includes S.M.A.R.T. objectives for which you need funding
  - Include relevant long-term goals in the strategic plan
- Identify information and data that will support the funding need
- Gather information and data that will support the funding need
  - This may involve collecting data for year or more
- Conduct assessments; Develop management plans (if possible)
Final Advice

- Follow the FOA instructions (even if illogical)
  - Always follow the FOA/funder instructions over this guidance
  - If asked to, reiterate same info in different sections
  - Better to repeat than leave a section blank

- Ask the funder questions if anything is unclear
  - Ask about the substance of your proposal, if allowable
  - Do not make assumptions

- Be concise

- Other suggestions?
Thank You!

Questions?

jsimmons@prospersustainably.com
(805) 694-8089 (office) / (805) 617-5685 (cell)

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