CHAPTER TWO: Pre-Proposal Activities and Support

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Finding Funding Opportunities

The Office of the Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation maintains a comprehensive website with links to an array of information designed to support all of the research and creative activities within the University community. This includes service units under the EVPRI, links useful in locating funding opportunities, electronic forms, workshop schedules, research-related policies, and compliance support. The site also in includes links to shared scientific resources and research centers and institutes at the university.

2.1 Search Process & Resources

Sponsor agency grant programs and program priorities change from year to year; therefore, the Office of Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA) has the responsibility to remain current in its knowledge about possible funding sources.   Links to several searchable databases are listed on the Funding Sources and Notification Services site. This contains a variety of information concerning public and private funding agencies, agency application forms, proposal writing information, and grant deadlines.

The most comprehensive of these databases is the Sponsored Programs Information Network (SPIN). SPIN is a grant program database of over 6000 programs covering all disciplines that makes searching for funding sources convenient. Searches for information can be performed using keyword, program type, sponsor, and deadlines as search drivers. The search results consist of pertinent information necessary in approaching a funding agency with a request for financial support. SPIN also allows researchers to save specific search criteria and have these searches automatically run at specified time intervals, e.g. every two weeks. The results of these automatic searches are then emailed directly to the investigator. This is a subscription service that is domain protected; therefore, access is limited to computer accounts registered within the University.

2.2 Research Databases

The Office of Sponsored Programs Administration matches faculty with funding opportunities as they become available. It also assists the staff with identifying possible collaborators, consultants and mentors for developing more comprehensive programs.

University faculty have access to a number of these databases where they have the ability to profile their research expertise in order to receive automatic updates when grant programs become available that match their identified areas of interest. The Proposal Development Office in SPA can answer questions concerning these databases.

2.3 Potential Funding Sources

The compatibility of proposed research and agency interests should be considered in reviewing possible funding sources. These interests are usually described in detail in the guidelines of the program. Potential applicants should call the program manager and discuss ideas prior to submission of a proposal. Subtleties that are not apparent in the guidelines and a slight adaptation in the method in which the project is presented can greatly increase the chance of it being received favorably. However, keep in mind that some private foundations have strict policies on contacting the foundation. Be sure to read the guidelines carefully.

The following is a checklist of questions to consider while researching a funding agency:

· How competitive is this program? What is the typical number of proposals received for a particular program or solicitation, and what is the number of grants awarded annually by the agency?

· What are the agency's eligibility requirements? What types of institutions and investigators does this agency fund? Are there geographical restrictions connected with its program? Are there citizenship requirements?

· What is the maximum and average award amount? How much total funding will be distributed through the granting process?

· What is the agency willing to support with funding? Will the agency allow researchers to offset salary for the time dedicated to the project? Will they allow equipment purchases? What activities, such as research, training and community service, do they specifically fund?

· Will cost sharing be required if an award is granted?

· What is the duration of the grants it supports? Are those grants renewable?

· Are there formal guidelines and application procedures? Is a preliminary proposal necessary or required? Are there application deadlines for grant programs or can proposals be submitted at any time?

· What does the agency expect in return for its funding? Are periodic updates required in addition to a final report? Are there terms the University cannot accept, such as restrictions on publications or intellectual property rights?

· Will the proposal be reviewed by an individual who is proficient in the subject of the research (peer reviewed) or by others with a principal role in the foundation/agency?

2.4 Types of Funding Sources

Government Agencies

Federal, state, and local government agencies constitute the primary source of external funding for grants and contracts at the University of Louisville. Major sources of federal funding at the University have included the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, Defense, and Justice and the National Science Foundation (NSF). Links to these agencies can be found on the [Funding Sources and Notification Services](#) page.

Most government agencies have a legislated mandate that restricts the types of programs they can fund and the rules are usually detailed in their guidelines. Most will use a peer review system to make funding decisions.

While individual federal agencies may inform their constituents via newsletter, website or other means of communication, the federal government in general uses two primary publications for advertising financial assistance programs. *The Federal Register is a daily newsletter outlining the business that is being conducted by the federal government. It includes new policies and regulations pertaining to government grants, as well as requests for applications. The [FedBizOpps](#) (FBO) is a listing of contract solicitations published to seek bids on activities that the federal government wants* to complete or products that it wants to purchase. In addition, the federal government now operates a clearing house web site for all federal grants ([Grants.Gov](#)). This site offers search capabilities based on keyword and agency. Researchers also have the option to sign up for email notification of funding opportunities based on keyword or agency criteria.

Foundations and Other Nonprofit Organizations

There are over 37,500 foundations in the United States that give grants. It is important, however, to carefully target those foundations most likely to be interested in the project topic.

As many as 80 percent of all applications to private foundations are inappropriate or misdirected, largely as a result of the presumption that all private foundations share a common purpose. Approaching a funding source is a highly individualized process and what may be appropriate to one sponsor may not be suitable to another.

When targeting a private foundation, be aware that these nonprofit organizations fall into several categories. National foundations, such as the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Foundation, have

highly competitive, nationwide grants programs. Special-interest foundations restrict their grants to programs within a single field. For example, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds only health projects. Corporate foundations prefer grants that benefit company employees or the corporation's interest and often are restricted to locales where they have a corporate presence. Family foundations often are restricted in geographical area and usually make small grants for projects in areas of family interest. Community foundations are public organizations that serve a specific geographical area, such as the Community Foundation of Louisville. For local foundations, be aware that the Development Office would like for PIs to contact them before making any contact. Other nonprofit organizations that award grants include associations for industrial or other special groups, fundraising organizations, and professional societies. Some of these organizations run formal grant programs and issue Requests for Proposals while others operate informally. Information on some of the organizations described can be found through the Council On Foundations or the Foundation Center.

Business and Industry

Corporations may give by means of a company-sponsored foundation or by means of a separate corporate giving program. In either case, corporate giving is almost always limited to programs of benefit to the shareholders, the employees, their families, or residents of specific locations where the company conducts business.

Since most industry sponsors do not run formal grant programs or issue Requests for Proposals, collaborative projects tend to originate through informal networking or prior contacts such as consulting relationships. Some nonprofit industry associations, such as the Electrical Power Research Institute, do make grants through organized research programs.

When approaching corporate grant makers, always consider the self-interest of the potential sponsor. A proposal to a corporation should emphasize how its support of the project will benefit the corporate goals.

2.5 Limited Submissions

Frequently, funding opportunities are designated as "limited submission programs", meaning that due to restrictions placed by the sponsor the university can only submit a specified number of proposals for consideration for an award. The Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation coordinates the internal screening and review process to determine which proposals can go forward on behalf of the University of Louisville. Before you begin to develop a proposal, please notify the EVPRI via email evpri@louisville.edu if the sponsor's program guidelines place any limits on the number of proposals that can be submitted by the university.

2.6 Executive Vice President for Research and Innovation Internal Grants Programs

EVPRI Internal Grants Programs web site

2.7 Information for Student Researchers

The University of Louisville recognizes the value of creative research and scholarship to the educational process. The following includes a high-level description of the primary programs aimed at promoting both Graduate and Undergraduate participation in these activities. Additional details can be found on the EVPRI web site.

Vice President for Research Undergraduate Research Scholar Grant (URS)

The primary purpose of a URS grant is to enrich the research, scholarship or creative arts experience of the undergraduate student by involving the student in research collaboration with a faculty mentor. The student is expected to become intellectually involved in the design and execution of the research project. The undergraduate student prepares the URS proposal after he or she has identified a faculty mentor with interest in the student's endeavors. The faculty mentor is expected to make arrangements for the student to receive up to three (3) credit hours for the research or creative activity and provide a grade for the work completed by the student. Students are encouraged to present a poster at the Undergraduate Research Day. The student may request up to $300 for supplies and expenses required for conducting the research or creative activity.

Graduate Assistantships

The Graduate School awards assistantships on a competitive basis, both for research and teaching. These assistantships provide a stipend and full tuition in exchange for 20 hours of University service. Information about deadlines and qualifications can be obtained in the graduate department of the school or program to which the student is applying for admission.

Student Support and Fellowships

Students seeking support for University research projects have access to the resources in the Sponsored Programs Development office. Students with a valid University e-mail account will have access to the on-line databases in order to conduct their own searches. The Student Financial Aid Office provides information and counseling on a variety of loan, grant, and scholarship programs for students seeking direct financial assistance for educational purposes.

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