Getting Started at CSUSB

If you are thinking of a potential grant idea, the best way to start is to jot some ideas down. Your ideas need not be very formal, and you may change them as they develop. What kind of research would you like to do? What kind of program would you like to administrate? What kind of creative activity would you like to undertake? You can talk to us about your ideas as well.

<u>Brainstorming</u> --
Once you have something on paper, you can begin to expand upon your thoughts. Answer some of the questions below in writing. Don't let any question slow you down. If you do not have an answer yet, that is ok, you can find one later.

> **Why** -- Why should your project be undertaken? What problem are you going to solve? What new level of excellence will you achieve? Who will be better served by your program? *-or-* How will the research contribute to scholarship in your area? *-or-* How will the artistic community benefit from your work?
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> **Causes** -- If you are solving a problem, what caused that problem? Why has it not been solved already? Why has the excellence you seek not been achieved before? What are the obstacles to conducting the research, creating the program, or performing the creative activity? Why have they not been overcome by others?
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> **What** -- What measurable and objective outcomes do you want to accomplish? At what point could you evaluate your program a success? What will you need to know for your research to be complete (for the time being)? What level of production or exhibition are you seeking in your creative work?
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> **How** -- How do you propose to achieve those objectives, overcome those obstacles? What specifically will you do?

As you undertake this initial thinking-through process, do not be concerned if your ideas change. You may start by thinking that you need computers to do X; and you may decide that in order to achieve your goals, you really need a part-time lab assistant to do Y instead.

<u>Planning</u> -- You will want to talk your ideas over both with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and with colleagues. Once you have a step-by-step procedure for how to gain your objectives, you will want to think strategically about what it will take to get there. You may start with a small grant, turn that work into a publication, a conference or an exhibition. These activities will give you a greater credibility when you apply for future grants from externally funded sources.

As you are awarded monies, you may get more involved with a professional or student organizations, present at invited lectures, or develop new course offerings. These activities will prepare you to apply for larger grants as your conception of needs and possibilities develop. Think about what you might want to do well ahead of time.

Building Alliances -- As you undertake your work, begin looking for sources of professional and financial support. Get a cheerleader as well as an experienced person to lend you encouragement or advice. Make sure you let other people know about what you are doing so that they can also help you.

Drafting -- When drafting a general grant, you might follow the structure below. You can reorganize the sections later to accommodate specific grant guidelines. Most grants will require sections like these. You should begin drafting before you even see a deadline or a Request for Proposals (an RFP). Once you do see the RFP, be sure to follow their guidelines for page lengths and topic areas.

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An Anatomy of a Grant Proposal

Cover Letter
Summary
(Write these last)

Problem Statement
(What is the problem you intend to address with funding)

Objectives
(What do you plan to achieve)

Approach
(How do you plan to achieve it)

Personnel
(Who will be doing the work and why are they qualified)

Evaluation
(How will you know that you have achieved your objectives)

Future Funding
(How will you sustain your efforts once the funds are exhausted)

Budget
(How much and explain why)

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Submitting -- Leave a lot of time for the minute details that arise at the end of the process. We will help with getting signatures, providing assurances, copying, and mailing or electronic submission. But these things take time, so it is best to plan ahead.

Boilerplate and Background Information -- One way to make the process easier is to collect boilerplate and background information into one file. At the Research and Sponsored Programs, we have background information for the University (how many students, their demographics, how many programs and professors, their background, how long the University has existed, etc.). You will want to create the same file for yourself, your department, or your program.

Resumes -- Almost every grant proposal requires the inclusion of resumes of key personnel. And, many sponsors restrict the number of pages that can be included in a resume, with that restriction usually being two pages. For example, NSF requires the following information on two pages maximum: professional and academic essentials and mailing address, up to five publications related to the project and five other significant publications; a list of recent research collaborators, and a list of persons over the last five years with whom there has been an association as thesis advisor or postdoctoral scholar sponsor.

Faculty and staff may find it handy to maintain a resume of reasonable length, one to two pages, containing the most current information on employment, publications, awards/memberships, and college/community service. Not only will it eliminate a preparation step in the grant proposal submission process, but it's handy to have when requested for other purposes that require a quick synopsis of your background.

For those with lengthy publications or speaking lists, it is advisable to keep those current in separate documents, to be attached or imported as needed.

Department or Program -- Part of almost every grant is introducing yourself. You want the sponsor to know about your department or program, and you want them to know what is best about it. You are part of your department and the past achievements are part of your record and promise for the future. Therefore, keep track of accomplishments. Who won what awards? What grants have already been given? What successes have already been had? What is the mission statement of the department or program? What is its vision? Keep all these in a file for easy references. In fact, if you wrote up a short paragraph or page introducing the department to any outside reader, you would have a good deal of work already done before you even hit a deadline.