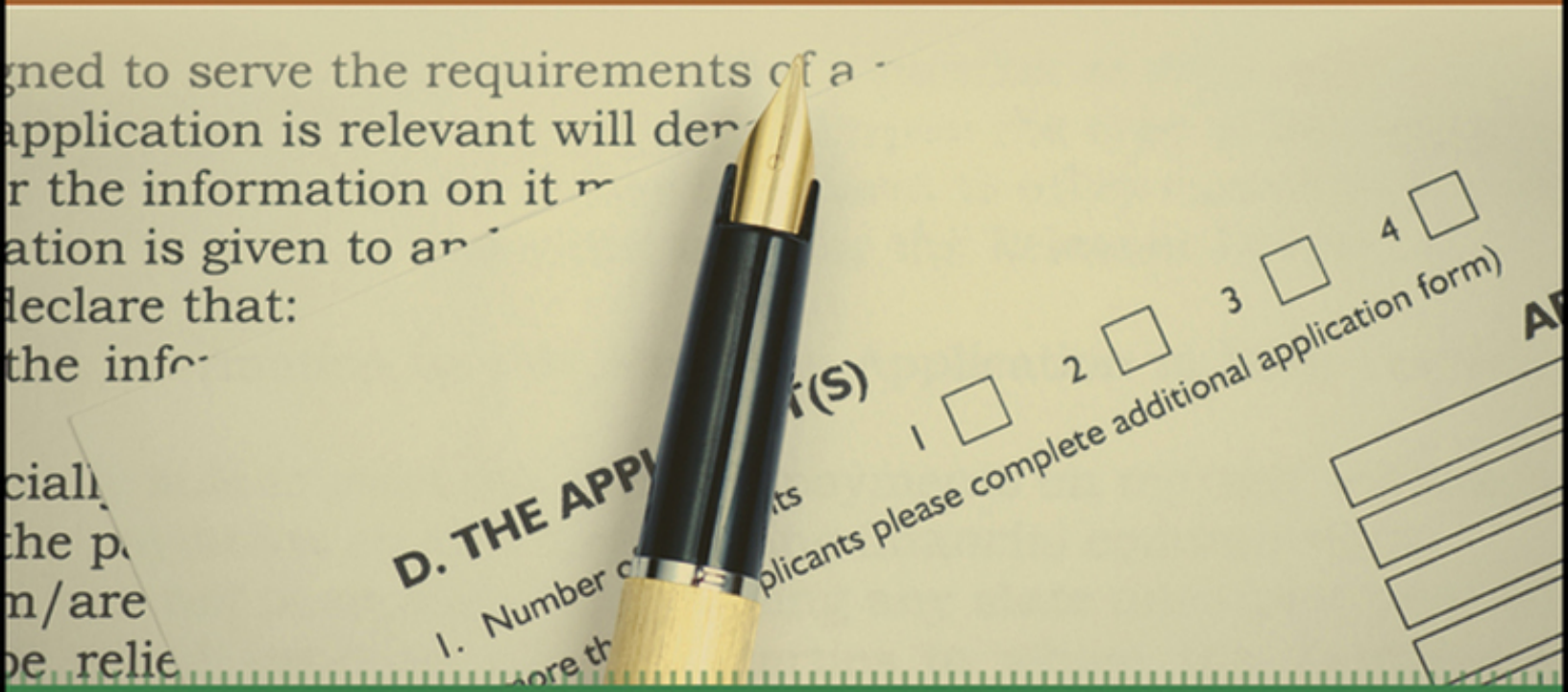
GRANT SEEKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR COLLEGE FACULTY



Mary M. Licklider and
The University of Missouri Grant Writer Network

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Grant Seeking in Higher Education

Strategies and Tools
for College Faculty

Mary M. Licklider
and
The University of Missouri Grant Writer Network
Foreword by David Attis

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Foreword

I FIRST ENCOUNTERED Dr. Mary Licklider and her team of grant writers at the University of Missouri (MU) while researching a report on best practices in supporting large-scale multidisciplinary research. One of the challenges I heard in talking to dozens of institutions was that proposals for large collaborative grants were so labor-intensive and complicated that few faculty investigators had the time or the experience to complete them. The MU Grant Writer Network had solved this problem by distributing expert grant writers throughout the university and connecting them through the central Office of Grant Writing and Publications. The results were impressive. Prior to the launch of the network in 1998, MU had won only three large-scale multidisciplinary grants. Since then, it has won more than 25—a result of the quality of research taking place on campus and the unprecedented support provided by its network of professional grant writers. The Network has grown from one individual in 1998 to 18 individuals today. Network grant writers have been involved in over $1.8 billion in proposals and over $304 million in awards.

Not every institution or every faculty member has access to an established group of effective grant writers, and that is where this book comes in. Mary and her team have distilled the lessons learned over more than a decade of grant writing into a comprehensive handbook. Whether you are at a community college, a liberal arts college, a master's university, or a major research university, you will find helpful advice in this book. Anyone in higher education looking for funding—from foundations, state agencies, or federal agencies; in the sciences, humanities, or social sciences—will learn something valuable from this resource.

The book covers the proposal process from start to finish, with advice ranging from the strategic (how to decide if an opportunity is worth the effort it will take to apply, how to think about funding at different career stages) to the mundane (how to set up e-mail alerts with opportunities from specific agencies, how to set the line spacing in a proposal). Readers get advice on each component of the proposal—cover letters, abstracts, budgets, budget justifications—including sample text, case studies, and common mistakes. There are even sections on managing the project, including HR, finance, and data management.

A key message of the book is the importance of knowing your audience. Not only do the authors provide detailed descriptions of the grant-making process at different agencies and foundations, they also provide first-person accounts from reviewers and program directors explaining what they look for, how they read, and the fastest ways to lose their interest. The book explains the most common reasons that funders reject proposals, when to resubmit, and when not to.

Supplementing the text is an online toolkit that will save proposal writers hours of work. It includes samples of all of the components of a grant proposal—letters of support, cover letters, proposal outlines, budget spreadsheets, detailed timelines, and task lists for proposal development. The book even includes resources for building your own grant writing office like the one at MU, with grant writer position descriptions, skills inventories, and performance evaluation tools.

Competition for grants in higher education has never been tougher, and it has probably never been more critical to institutional missions and individual faculty careers. Most grant proposals (Mary estimates more than two-thirds) are turned down. Given the high stakes and the level of effort required to prepare a proposal, there is no excuse for

submitting a sloppy, poorly prepared, or irrelevant application. This valuable book provides all of the information you need to make sure that you have asked all the right questions, avoided the common mistakes, and submitted a proposal that gives your idea the best possible chance of success.

David Attis, PhD
Practice Manager
Education Advisory Board

Preface
What's in a Name?

IF YOU WORK in higher education, whether a two-year, four-year, doctoral, or research institution, and your position entails generating grant proposals and running grant-funded projects, this handbook is for you. If you also have leadership responsibilities at your institution, we hope you will find the Appendix helpful and relevant to those duties. We expect that you will use this volume as a handbook, reading through the chapters, picking and choosing among the Toolkit items those that suit your needs, and perhaps going back to reread sections when circumstances or the needs of a particular project warrant it. You will encounter some repetition of concepts across the chapters. We did this deliberately so that each individual chapter can stand alone at least to some extent.

Our title tells you that this book is aimed at an academic audience. Our examples are drawn from our experience with proposals to support the research, scholarship, creative activity, instruction, and outreach of the faculty members with whom we have worked over the years. Whereas we are a network of grant writing consultants at the University of Missouri, a land-grant, Research I institution, our advice does not by any means assume that you will have access to professionals like us to help with your grant proposals. We are keenly aware that many, if not most, of our readers will be at smaller institutions without this kind of support. Indeed, survey data from the National Organization of Research Development Professionals (NORDP) suggests that the 14-year tenure of our Network is extremely unusual even among institutions that do provide grant writing support now.

A Rose by Any Other Name …

There is more than a little irony in the fact that, despite our success in creating what is increasingly recognized as a national model, the “grant writer” label seems to be at the bottom of the list of desirable titles for many in the emerging field of research development. The selection of titles is fraught with institutional turf wars: “Specialist” and “coordinator” may be considered lower-level positions; “officer” and “development” are reserved for those in the development division; anything with “writer” is relegated to lower salary levels. And so it goes.

In an informal survey of the members of NORDP in spring 2010, I found that, despite the use of a variety of titles, the activities which are by far the most common among the membership are proposal development, identifying and distributing funding opportunities, and pulling interdisciplinary teams together. This was reinforced when NORDP surveyed its membership in 2011: 87 percent of research development offices are editing grant proposals and helping to identify funding opportunities for their faculties.

This is not to say, however, that the grant writer title is without its issues. We settled on “grant writing consultant”—and that is the title we will use throughout this book—because we do not for the most part compose the first drafts of the proposal narratives. We are experts in process; our faculty members are the content experts. Our jobs entail helping faculty members identify funding opportunities they might otherwise miss, identifying and pulling interdisciplinary and interinstitutional teams together, organizing proposal documents, organizing the people and tasks of proposal preparation, managing the

timeline for proposal preparation (read: polite, but persistent, nagging), drafting budgets and budget justifications, and conducting workshops and graduate courses in grantsmanship.

It is worth reiterating that this book will be useful to you regardless of whether you have access to grant writing professionals. This book lays out the work of proposal development and contextualizes that work in an academic environment. You may need or choose to do all of the tasks associated with preparing your grant proposals, or you may hand some of those tasks off to others. Either way, we believe the advice and tools of this book will allow you to proceed more effectively and efficiently.

Using This Book

We have organized this book into three parts: Part One provides advice on proposal development and management of the resulting grant awards. Part Two offers tools and templates to help you accomplish those tasks. The Appendix advises campus leaders who wish to benefit from our experience in building institutional grants culture.

Part One is divided into three sections: “Diving into Grants Culture” lays the groundwork for your proposal work. In this section, Chapter 1 begins with an overview, historical and current, macro and micro, that should help you contextualize your grant work. Chapter 2 walks you through the process of identifying and winnowing potential sponsors for your work. Chapter 3 asks you to look up from your desk or lab bench, look around your campus, and tap the support that is already in place for you. Following this thread, Chapter 4 examines current sponsor preferences for collaborative and interdisciplinary work. Finally, Chapter 5 moves past these more general activities to help you prepare to write a specific proposal.

The second section of Part One, “Developing Your Proposal,” walks you through the key sections of a typical grant proposal. This section includes chapters on the writing itself (Chapter 6), the abstract (Chapter 7), the proposal narrative or project description (Chapter 8), the budget (Chapter 9), and the proposal package as a whole (Chapter 10).

The last section of Part One, “Next Steps,” deals with postsubmission issues: what to do when your proposal is initially declined (Chapter 11) and then finally awarded (Chapter 12).

Part Two comprises a Toolkit of tested materials that we have found helpful in our own proposal work. (The Toolkit can also be accessed online; see p. iv.) This Toolkit is divided into four sections. As its title suggests, the first section, “Diving into Grants Culture,” parallels the section by the same title in Part One of the book. The glossary and other materials in this section are designed to help you think about your project as an experienced grants professional would. The materials in Section Two, “Managing the Proposal Work,” should help you manage the proposal process without being overwhelmed as you track all the people and proposal documents involved in the process. Section Three, “Developing Your Proposal,” focuses directly on the parts of the typical proposal, offering templates, examples, and cheat sheets to help you generate a strong proposal and respond appropriately to reviewer comments.

The last section of the Toolkit, “Building Institutional Grants Culture,” and the Appendix that follows Part Two are aimed at campus leaders seeking to build your institution’s grants culture. We offer sample documents in the Toolkit and advice in the Appendix that are drawn from our experience in nurturing the University of Missouri’s Grant Writer Network as a resource for MU’s faculty.

We hope that you will find this handbook both useful and usable.

Acknowledgments

WE ARE GRATEFUL first and foremost for the creativity and dedication of the University of Missouri faculty members with whom we have worked.

We are grateful for the consistent administrative support for the Grant Writer Network from the University of Missouri's chief research officers over the years: Jack Burns, Rob Hall, Jim Coleman, and Rob Duncan.

About the Authors

THE UNIVERSITY OF Missouri (MU) **Grant Writer Network** was initiated in 1998 and has grown and thrived in the university's interdisciplinary climate. From one position in 1998, the Network has grown to 18 positions in 2012. Network members have helped with nearly 2,000 grant proposals, which have encompassed a wide range of sponsors and brought grant awards of more than $304 million to MU. This book pulls together some of the collective wisdom that has evolved through the generous collaborative relationships that characterize the Network.

Mary M. Licklider, director of the Office of Grant Writing and Publications in MU's Office of Research, provides leadership to the University of Missouri Grant Writer Network, coordinates and teaches in MU's grantsmanship courses and seminars, collaborates with faculty members on proposal preparation, and administratively oversees MU's federal priorities and limited submission processes. She has worked in education for some 30 years in roles involving teaching, writing, research, publication, and leadership at both the K–12 and postsecondary levels.

Mary holds a BA in English from Webster University, as well as an MEd in curriculum and instruction and a PhD from MU in education, focusing on organizational change. She and her husband raise alpacas in rural Boone County, Missouri, and are active in MOPACA, the Midwest's regional association for alpaca enthusiasts.

Mary Barile is the associate director of the Office of Grant Writing and Publications in the MU Office of Research. She earned her PhD in theatre history from MU, was the grant writing consultant for Family and Community Medicine, and later served as the grant writing consultant for the Center

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Mark B. Child, grant writing consultant for the School of Health Professions, works with researchers seeking funding opportunities and assists faculty with the development, writing, and submission of internal and extramural grant proposals. Mark earned his PhD in anthropology from Yale University, where his research focused on health-related issues pertaining to the fields of ethnography, ethnohistory, and archaeology. He has written books, scientific articles in peer-reviewed journals, and edited volumes. Mark has more than 15 years of experience researching and coordinating grant-funded projects, including the acquisition of nationally competitive National Science Foundation (NSF) and Fulbright grants for his own research projects.

Bob Glidewell began his grant writing career in 1996 and has assisted various nonprofit and commercial organizations in Texas, Oklahoma, and Missouri in acquiring grant funding. Since 2007, he has worked to develop grant proposals and funding opportunities for MU's Robert J. Trulaske, Sr. College of Business. These projects include interdisciplinary partnerships with other schools, colleges, and institutes on the MU campus. He assists with the graduate grantsmanship courses and has served as a reviewer on multiple grant-review panels for the NSF.

Bob's publications include newspaper, magazine, and journal articles as well as training manuals for corporate and

government clients. He is a graduate of Southwest Oklahoma State University and the University of Missouri.

Cynthia Haydon has been employed in grant writing or grants administration at MU for eight years. As the grant writing consultant for the MU School of Medicine, Cynthia currently works with the associate dean for research to prioritize projects and assist researchers in conceptualizing and completing grant proposals. She is available to investigators to help with specific questions throughout the grant process, from the funding search through the details of submission procedures. Cynthia previously worked in fundraising research at MU and at the University of Southern Indiana. She earned her BA in art history from MU and has completed course work toward a master's degree in library science.

Susan Hazelwood is now retired but was associate director of the Office of Grant Writing and Publications in the MU Office of Research for 12 years. Prior to joining the Office of Research, she was a research associate professor in MU's School of Medicine, funded on grant dollars, for 20 years. She has taught grantsmanship skills to faculty members and supported them in obtaining external funding for their scholarship and research activities. Susan has mentored and supported the newer members of the MU Grant Writer Network as they conquered the steep learning curve of grant writing positions. Susan earned her BS in life sciences at Missouri State University and completed course work and research toward a master's degree in biological sciences from MU.

Shelley A. Hilton, grant writing consultant for the MU College of Engineering, coordinates all aspects of the preparation and submission of grant proposals, including identifying opportunities, building and managing teams, editing and writing, building budgets and budget justifications, and serving as a liaison with campus and

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With more than 15 years of grants experience, Shelley began her career directing grant-funded research projects in health psychology. For the past eight years, she has been a grant writing consultant at MU, starting in the Truman School of Public Affairs before transitioning to her current position with the College of Engineering. Shelley holds an MA in social psychology from MU and a BA in psychology from Creighton University.

Sheryl Koenig, grant writing consultant in the Bond Life Sciences Center, assists researchers with preparing grant proposals. With over 40 investigators from 15 departments located within the Life Sciences Center, the wide variety of disciplines brings a challenge that Sheryl finds fascinating. She holds a BS in mathematics and an MEd in educational technology and has been involved in the grants world for 14 years.

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