Community-Engaged Research Team Support (CERTS)

Tips & Strategies for Funding Community-Engaged Research (CEnR)

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Goals

• To develop a fundraising plan that aligns with the principles and values of CEnR
• To strengthen proposals for CEnR
• To avoid common pitfalls in developing proposals for CEnR
• To stay informed about funding opportunities for CEnR
Developing a Fundraising Plan

• Utilize all of your connections
• Be proactive, not reactive
• Consider non-traditional, creative funding
• Consider wide range of funding sources
• Stay on top of funding opportunities
  – Grants.gov
Considering a Given RFP

- Does it fit with partnership’s priorities & agenda?
- Is funding agency knowledgeable, supportive of partnership approaches?
- What is its history of support?
- When is the proposal due?
- What is the time-frame for funding?
- Are components consistent with CEnR?
- What are review criteria?
- Are reviewers appropriate?
Collaboratively Writing Proposals

• Start with a good idea
• Assemble research team
• Determine/clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations
• Make decisions about budget
• Review proposal
Basic Proposal Writing Principles

• Develop your main idea.
• Target specific funding agency/announcement
• Craft a concept paper
• Work with program directors, mentors, peers & partners to refine
• Don’t procrastinate – get started early, set aside dedicated time, submit only your best work (not rushed)
• Solicit, accept, and integrate feedback – before, during and after submission
Basic Proposal Writing Principles

• Read and follow all instructions
• Conduct and demonstrate a thorough literature review
• Provide a specific rationale for your proposed study
• Be certain that your stated aims follow your rationale
• Present a complete and organized research plan
• Include legible tables and figures
Common Reviewer Concerns

- Tired ideas, vague scientific rationales/connections
- Weak arguments for theoretical approach
- Lack of knowledge of published relevant work
- Inexperience with essential methodologies
- Disorganized research plans
- Insufficient quasi-experimental details
- Unrealistic amounts of work – overly ambitious
- Vague dissemination plans for proposed results
- Poor accounting for ethical issues

Bill Elwood, NIH, 2008
What Drives Reviewers Crazy?

• Applicants don’t follow instructions
• Inconsistencies between what’s described in narrative & in budget
• Acronyms used & not explained
• Numbers in budget don’t add up
• Multiple spelling mistakes
• Tiny type and/or too much text
• Data sources cited are old
• Letters don’t actually say anything
Common Pitfalls in CEnR Proposals

- Not clear how CEnR principles are integrated, how community was involved, benefits of partnership
- Failure to define community
- Underdeveloped community partnerships
- Community translation premature – intervention needs more work
- Unclear what will be left behind – continued impact of intervention, partnership, infrastructure, policy change
- Insufficient documentation of investigator experience

David Stoff, NIH, 2008
What Drives Reviewers of CEnR Crazy?

• Significance & rationale based on national data
• Community described only by needs, not also assets
• No sound rationale for composition of partnership
• No clear link between community priorities & proposed focus/approach
• Study design has no room for participatory process
• No attention paid to barriers to participation
• No methods described for community engagement
• Community board mentioned but not described
What Drives Reviewers of CEnR Crazy?

• No evidence of community capacity building
• Not clear how the funding is divided among partners
• Not clear who contributed to proposal and how
• Most or all of funding retained by applicant organization
Ways to Strengthen Proposals

- Discuss idea with program officer
- Invite program officer to see your work in action
- Be creative while following instructions
- Review & cite applicant and peer review guidelines
- Ask trusted colleague to review
- Debrief on reviewer comments
- Volunteer to serve as proposal reviewer
Citations


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