Grant-writing in Digital Humanities

Julia Flanders
Digital Scholarship Group
NULab for Texts, Maps, and Networks
Northeastern University
@julia_flanders
Significant People

**Principal investigator:** responsible for the conduct of the grant proposal and grant award; typically must have a PhD or other terminal degree; this role may be restricted to specific job types (negotiable).

**Program officer:** public-facing staff at funding agency, serve as point of contact and information source.

**Grant administrator:** staff in the institutional office of research administration, responsible for compliance with funding regulations. Often specialized to focus on pre-award or post-award activities.

**Financial administrator:** administrative staff in your department, not typically responsible for grant administration but may be helpful.

**Subcontractors, consultants:** people who have financial involvement in the grant, outside the institution.

**Collaborators:** people who are contributing effort but are not financially implicated in the grant; may be considered as cost-sharing.
Key Fiscal Concepts

Fringe benefits: funding over and above the base salary, to cover medical/retirement/disability/etc. benefits. Rates vary from year to year.

Cost-sharing: an institutional contribution to the costs of a grant-funded project, either in cash or in contributed effort or other resources. May be required by the funding agency.

Indirect costs: the fractional cost of the institutional infrastructure on which the grant depends, charged against the grant by the institution. May be waived or reduced by agreement with the administration; some fraction of indirect costs is often returned to the grant-holding department. Rates vary from year to year. Note that private foundations typically refuse to pay indirect costs.

Subcontract: a financial arrangement with another institution to perform work and spend money, as part of the grant. Note that the subcontracting institution will probably also charge indirect costs!
Grant-Writing Preparation

1. Start early! All of the below should happen *before* you start work on the proposal.

2. Meet/make contact with your institutional grant administrator to find out their process and timetable (for both grant proposals and award administration)

3. Take whatever training they recommend

4. Meet with your dean/chair to let them know you’re applying and to ask about grant administration support in your department

5. Contact the program officer with rough grant idea for initial reality check

6. Contact potential collaborators to ascertain their interests, needs, level of participation: get on the same page

7. Meet with your digital scholarship and/or data management librarian, ask about their process and forms of support

8. Look at the funding program, understand the requirements
Major Components of the Proposal

1. What will we do and why is it important? (Scope and impact, environmental scan)

2. Who will be served and why are they important? (Audience and demonstration of need)

3. Who are we and why are we the right people to do it? (Credentials)

4. What is involved and how long will it take? (Work plan)

5. How much will it cost and why is this reasonable? (Budget and budget justification)

6. How will we make the most of this investment in the long term? (Sustainability plan, data management plan)

Remember: this is not an academic paper but a bid to do something on behalf of the public.
Additional crypto-questions…

1. Are we sane and competent? (Feasibility and plausibility, level of detail)
2. Have we done our homework or are we self-absorbed divas? (Environmental scan)
3. Can we play well with others? (Appropriate use of collaboration, involvement of other institutions)
4. Are we responsible planners? (Work plan, data management plan, sustainability)
5. Are we good at getting things done? (Description of work management and processes)
6. Do we have the support of our institution? Do other people think this is a good idea? (Cost-sharing, letters of support and commitment, advisory board)
Stylistic points

• Assume someone reading in haste and reading a lot of proposals
• Be clear, concise
• Be concrete
• Remind the reader about key points and fundamentals
• Don’t use overblown superlatives
• Use headings to create clear narrative segments and to support fast skimming/navigation
• Read Hemingway, not Joyce, before you start
Grant-Writing Process

1. Start early! 3–6 months before the deadline isn’t too soon
2. Meet with collaborators to agree on overall scope, goals (make sure they fit within the parameters of the funding program)
3. Work with digital scholarship librarian to work out scoping and funding for any digital components and data management planning
4. Make inventory/checklist of proposal requirements
5. Develop work plan and confirm it with all participants (especially developers)
6. Develop budget and make sure collaborators agree on distribution of resources; get approval from relevant authorities
7. Write narrative description of the project and share with collaborators; get feedback from program officer
8. Write/assemble other parts of the proposal (methods, staffing, CVs, environmental scan, letters of support, data management plans, etc.)
9. Check length, formatting, and requirements early enough to adjust
10. Submit for internal grant administrator review by their deadline
Thank you!

Julia Flanders

j.flanders@northeastern.edu

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