

Proposal Writing Workshop

Hosted by the Foundation Relations & Corporate Philanthropy
Team

A dark blue diagonal graphic that starts from the bottom left corner and extends towards the top right corner, creating a triangular shape in the bottom right of the slide.

Welcome to our pilot workshop!

- Agenda
- Introductions
- Community Agreements
- Icebreaker
- Modules for workshop series

Agenda for two-day workshop

Modules

- Introductions (9:15-9:30)
- Module 1: Interpreting the RFP (9:30-10:15)
- BREAK: 10:15-10:25
- Module 2: Goals and Outcomes (10:25-10:55)
- Module 3: Technical grant writing: writing for clarity (11-11:30)
- Module 4: Methodology
- Module 5: Outputs, outcomes, and impact
- Module 6: Peer and facilitator proposal feedback

Modules 1-3 will be covered on day one; Modules 4-6 will be covered on day two

Introductions

- Name
 - Department
 - Foundation
- Opportunity you are focused on

Meet your facilitators:

- Margaret Guerrero
- David Siegfried
- Aaron Diaz
- Jillian Parlee

Land Acknowledgement

FRCP recognizes that Berkeley sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the historic and sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band.

We recognize that every member of the Berkeley community has benefitted, and continues to benefit, from the use and occupation of this land since the institution's founding in 1868. Consistent with our values of community and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to Native peoples. By offering this Land Acknowledgement, we affirm Indigenous sovereignty and will work to hold the University of California, Berkeley more accountable to the needs of American Indian and Indigenous peoples.

This acknowledgment was co-created by the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and [Native American Student Development](#).

Community Agreements & Conditions for Success

In this workshop, we agree to honor the following principles:

- Confidentiality
- Respect
- Housekeeping
- Others?

Icebreaker Activity: Things you love!

Based on the clothing you are wearing, everyone shares answers to the following questions:

Red/Orange – what is your favorite food?

Yellow/Green – share a life goal

Blue – one stressful thing about your job you wish you could improve

Purple – favorite way to revive yourself during the workday

Grey – your favorite book or movie

Black – one thing you love about your job

White – what's your phone background?
Is there a story behind it?

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Overview: Evaluate an RFP and other program information to inform proposal content and organization

Outcome(s): Participants learn to read through RFP's and identify key components and requirements for the opportunity.

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity (30-45 minutes)

Key things to identify:

- Eligibility
- Application process including due dates
- High Level Goals for the Foundation *in general*
- High Level Goals for for the Foundation *in issuing the RFP*
- Activities supported/examples of successful proposal ideas
- Award amounts and # of years funded
- Budget requirements for different stages of the proposal (ie. LOI vs full proposal)
- Any mention of indirect vs direct costs
- Selection criterias

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Module 1: Activities

1. Review the Donaghue Foundation's "Greater Value" RFP as a model of what to identify;
2. Read through the RFP you wish to apply for and identify/highlight the relevant information;
3. In pairs working with someone applying for the same RFP review the words and key information you highlighted
4. If time allows open a google doc and and create an outline for the RFP. In each section add language from the RFP into a comments sections to have on hand as a resource when drafting your responses.

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Step 1: Gather all your resources:

- Donaguhe Foundation's Homepage
- Donaghue Foundation's "Greater Value" webpage
- Donahue Foundation's "Greater Value" Announcement .pdf
- Any other materials such as FAQ's that they list on their site

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Step 2:

Underline/highlight all relevant information and language! Specifically look for key things to identify such as (See mocked up Donaghue):

Key things to identify:

- Eligibility
- Application process including due dates
- High Level Goals for the Foundation *in general*
- High Level Goals for for the Foundation *in issuing the RFP*
- Activities supported/examples of successful proposal ideas
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Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Step 3:

1. Create an LOI outline using the questions or the format requested in the RFP;
2. Insert as “Comments” any key information or language from the RFP, website, or any other foundation materials which might help you develop responses to each section of the LOI.

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

Practice Activity:

1. open the links to the RFP you are interested in applying for and begin highlighting/cut and pasting all relevant information
2. If possible, compare your highlights with a colleague who is applying for the same opportunity. What are some key things you learned/need to focus on
3. If time allows, create an outline in a google doc of the LOI and begin cut and pasting language for the RFP into comments for each section

Module 1: Interpreting the Opportunity

RFP/Website Links:

- [Russell Sage](#)
- [Spencer Foundation: Large Research Grants](#)
- [WT Grant Reducing Inequality](#)
- [William M. Keck Foundation – Concept Phase and Phase I Application](#)

Module 2: Goals & Importance

Overview: Foundations are interested in how your work will help to accomplish their stated goals in their RFP or program description. Identifying the overarching goals of your work early and the impact it will have if successful will help to shape your proposal.

Outcomes: How to understand the foundation's goals, how they describe them, and how your work aligns to make your proposal competitive.

Module 2: Goals & Importance

Questions to consider:

- What are the goals of the foundation?
- What is the impact you will achieve with your work?
- Why is it important to solve the problem you and the foundation are aiming to address?

Tip: insert a comment into your proposal outline with the foundation's language on its goals and the problem it wants to address. Refer back to this language throughout proposal development to help to continue to reiterate how your work will help meet their goal.

Module 2: Goals & Importance

Module 2 Activity: Spend 5-10 minutes thinking about how your proposed work aligns with the foundation's goals. Write out 3-5 key bullets as to the ways your work will help to achieve the foundation's goals. Focus on impact vs. immediate outputs.

Pair share: With someone *not* working on the same RFP as you, share the goals of your foundation's funding opportunity, the goals of your work and how they align. Partners will share each other's goals with the broader group. (15 minutes)

Module 3:

Writing for Clarity

Clarity
is
persuasive.

Module 3:

Writing for clarity

Overview:

Understand your audience, what they need to know and strategies for conveying the information to a broad audience.

Outcomes:

Participants will be able to develop succinct proposal language that aligns their work with foundation goals.

Write to your
audience, not over
them.

Foundation reviewers can be:

- Academics in your field
- Academics not in your field
- Founders and family members
- Lawyers, doctors, bankers, pilots...

Research your foundation audience.

Program officers = primary reviewers,
translators and advocates

**External panels, consultants, advisory
board members** = secondary reviewers

Board members/trustees/directors = final
reviewers and decision makers

Let's take a moment to look at our
audience.

What do they need to know?



Refer to the Writing Tips handout for more information on bringing these three themes out in your proposals.

Persuasive Proposal Writing:

General advice

1. Emphasize benefits.
2. Favor active language.
3. Minimize wordiness.
4. Minimize jargon.
5. Support your claims with evidence.

Features, differentiators, benefits

Features: aspects of your project or experimental approach

+

Benefits: why those aspects are significant

=

Differentiators: the features of your project that set you apart from what others in the field are doing.

Emphasize **benefits** by connecting them directly to **features** in your proposals.

We will design **the first field-deployable continuous $^{15}\text{N}_2\text{O}$ pool dilution approach for quantifying N_2 production and $\text{N}_2:\text{N}_2\text{O}:\text{NO}_x$ partitioning.** Linking these gasses via microbial metabolisms will not only provide **the first continuous N_2 gas flux measurements** but also the most comprehensive understanding of gaseous N losses from soil.

Active voice

Active voice: A does something or acts upon B.

Postdoc Gomez will analyze samples.

Vs.

Samples will be analyzed by one of our postdocs.

Tips:

1. Use active voice unless you have good reason to use passive (see next slide)
2. Use personal pronouns to convey responsibility
 - a. 'We' and 'our' are acceptable substitutes for teams or organizations.
3. Convert passive to active by rewording sentences:

Risk is assumed when policies are hastily implemented.

You assume risk when you hastily implement policies.

Passive voice:

When to use it

Passive voice has its place. Use it when:

- You do not know the actor
- You do not want to mention the actor
- The receiver is more important than the actor

To prevent contamination and spoilage, field samples are rapidly packaged and preserved on site.

- To clearly link two sentences:

We will design the first field-deployable continuous $^{15}\text{N}_2\text{O}$ pool dilution approach for quantifying N_2 production and $\text{N}_2:\text{N}_2\text{O}:\text{NO}_x$ partitioning. Linking these gasses via microbial metabolisms will not only provide the first continuous N_2 gas flux measurements but also the most comprehensive understanding of gaseous N losses from soil.

Wordiness

1. Use precise active verbs
2. Choose simple words
3. Avoid nominalization
4. Avoid clichés and idioms
5. Minimize or explain jargon
6. Avoid long sentences

Wordiness:

Use precise,
descriptive active
verbs

Replace imprecise verbs like allow, permit, perform, provide or provide for with precise verbs:

Our formula allows for speedier diffusion of molecules.

Better: Our formula diffuses molecules more efficiently.

Wordiness:

Choose simple words.

Minimize/replace long or pretentious words:

Wordy	Simple
Configuration	Shape, design
Demonstrate	Show
Methodology	Method, approach, process

In this project, novel Raman spectroscopy will be **utilized** to observe chemical reactions...

Better: In this project, novel Raman spectroscopy will be used to observe chemical reactions...

Even better: We will use novel Raman spectroscopy to observe chemical reactions...

[Refer to the Eliminating Wordiness Handout for more examples](#)

Wordiness:

Cliches and Idioms

Replace noticeable cliches idioms:

Noticeable cliches:

The holy grail
State-of-the-art
New paradigm

Replace idioms with simpler words:

Idiom	Simple replacement
As a general rule	Usually/generally
In the final analysis	Finally
Of considerable magnitude	Big/large/great
In light of the fact that	Since/because

[More idioms and expressions in the Eliminating Wordiness handout](#)

Wordiness:

Nominals

Change nominals to verbs:

The project team had a **meeting**.

Better: The project team met.

What to do:

- Convert nominals to verbs or adjectives
- Convert prepositional phrases to adjectives or adverbs

Verb	Nominalization
Configure	Configuration
Demonstrate	Demonstration
Measure	Measurement
Prolong	Prolongation
Remove	Removal

[Refer to the Eliminating Wordiness Handout for more examples](#)

Wordiness:

Long Sentences

Beware long sentences:

For many years, it seemed nearly impossible to rationally design a protein to fold into a specific structure, but the speed of today's computers, in concert with the lessons learned by biologists about the factors controlling protein structure and creative methods to translate these rules into algorithms, has made it possible, now, to design a protein that not only folds into a stable structure, but can function like an enzyme.

70 words

Better:

Recent advances in computing have enabled the design of protein structure making it possible to design a stable protein that functions as an enzyme.

24 words

Wordiness:

Jargon

Tips:

1. Minimize jargon when summarizing.
 - a. Overview
 - b. Unique aspects
 - c. Significance
 - d. Benefit statements
2. Define necessary jargon
3. Use the foundation's jargon where possible
4. Jargon in methods sections is okay, but keep benefit statements jargon-free.
5. Use acronyms carefully
 - a. Explode where necessary for clarity
 - b. Overuse convolutes

Unsupported claims

Beware superlative language and appeals to authority or reputation:

This project will leverage the most advanced cryo-EM facilities in the world.

The novelty of this project lies in the interdisciplinary composition of this team.

No other group has come close to solving this problem.

Unsupported claims

Unsupported claims can be subtle:

We will use a combination of a cutting-edge stable isotope method ($^{15}\text{N}_2\text{O}$ pool dilution) coupled with newly developed printed sensors to quantify the $\text{N}_2:\text{N}_2\text{O}:\text{NO}_x$ partitioning and associated drivers (mineral N, N_2O , pH, temperature, moisture, oxygen) in undisturbed field soils. The high frequency data produced will allow us to develop algorithms to model fluxes and behavior associated with environmental drivers, and ultimately upscale our results to ecosystems and regions and from days to centuries.

A revision:

Comprehensive understanding of soil microbe contribution to the N cycle requires the ability to continuously measure gaseous N losses from soil in the field against background atmospheric N. Previous efforts identified a lab measurement for N_2 , but it is non-continuous, only measures concentrations, and is untenable for intensive field measurements needed to quantify patterns (doi:10.1021/acs.est.9b00812). We seek to build a field-deployable $^{15}\text{N}_2\text{O}$ pool dilution approach that will quantify N_2 production with $\text{N}_2:\text{N}_2\text{O}:\text{NO}_x$ partitioning. Our approach uses novel printable, continuous environmental sensors that are small and easy to replicate. With continuous measurement of partitioned N gas fluxes we will develop the first coupled dynamical model of N_2 and N-gas emissions from soils and upscale our results from small areas to ecosystems and regions and from days to centuries.

Writing for Clarity

Practice

Take some time to think about the clarity of your concept?.

What is unclear?

What can be trimmed?

Day 2

Agenda

- Module 4: Methodology
- Module 5: Outputs, outcomes, and impact
- Module 6: Peer review

Module 4: Methodology

Overview: The methodology section of a proposal is where you can explain how you will do your proposed work. This section is where you can get into more detail about your work plan, timeline, and approach as well as demonstrate your expertise. This will be your most technical section of a proposal.

Outcomes: Begin outlining a methodology section of your proposal highlighting how your approach is unique and how it will accomplish your goals and the foundation's.

Methodology

Some key questions to consider when developing this section include:

- What are your key research questions?
- What is the current landscape of the field?
- What is novel about your approach?
- How will you structure your study?
- What is the timeline of your work?
- What is your team's makeup and how are you uniquely qualified to do this work?
- Why now?
- What are the risks to your approach or research and how will you mitigate these risks?

Module 4: Methodology

Activity:

Sketch out your methodology and articulate answers to the questions provided in the worksheet

Module 5: Outputs, outcomes and impact

Outcomes/outputs:

- Who is the audience that is going to use this work?
- How will the work be disseminated?
- What are the end products? Who will use them?

Impact:

- What are the long term implications of the work? Big picture: what is this doing?
- What is the science or new work that could be enabled by your work?

Module 5: Outputs, outcomes and impact

Overall Goal (Impact): To significantly contribute to advancing the Chancellor's goals of increasing Cal's African American and Latino undergraduate student over the next 10 years.

Objective #1: Maximize UC Berkeley's outreach to and recruitment of low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented minority (URM) students in California, with an emphasis on the Bay Area.

Activities/outputs:

- Expand the DCAC program to an additional 3–6 schools in Contra Costa County and Oakland high schools.
- Place trained, recent Cal graduates from URM groups in full-time positions at Bay Area high schools to educate college counselors, students, parents, and community members on the attainability of a UC Berkeley education.

Module 5: Outputs, outcomes and impact

Activity:

Sketch out a few anticipated outputs of your work and the overarching impact from these outputs; share and get feedback

Module 6: Peer and facilitator proposal feedback



Thank you for
participating!

Keep in touch.

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