



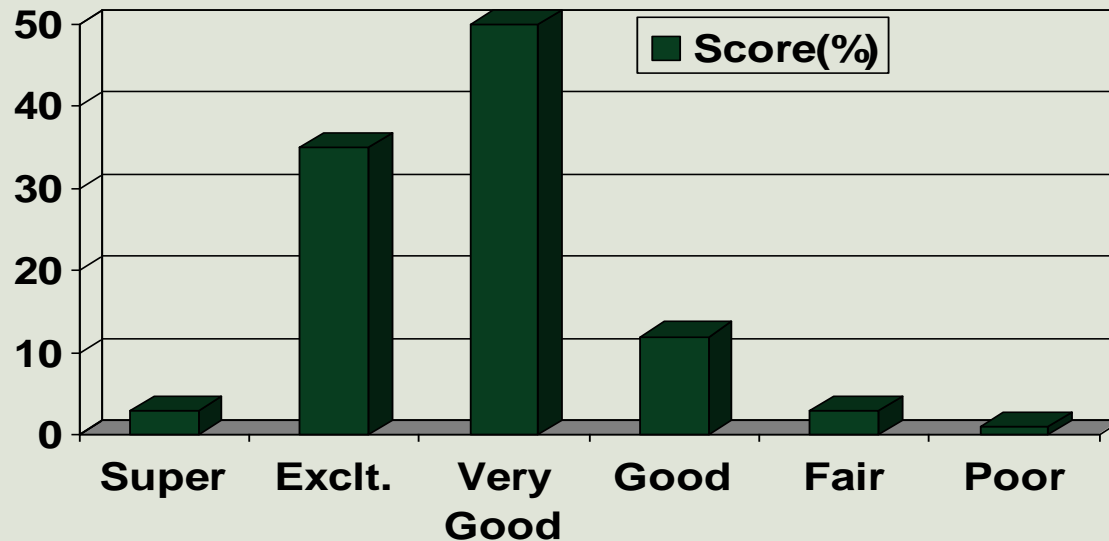
Council on Undergraduate Research

Learning Through Research

The Rhetoric of the Grant Proposal

Proposal Writing Institute

Here's The Problem:



- ✧ Too many “Very Good” proposals.
- ✧ Not enough money to fund them.

A Good Proposal

- ✧ Is a good idea,
- ✧ Well expressed,
- ✧ With clear methods for pursuing the idea,
- ✧ With clear methods for evaluating the findings, and
- ✧ With clear methods for making the outcomes known to all who need to know.

A Competitive Proposal is...

- All of the above
- Appropriate for the Program
- Responsive to the Program Announcement

Who will read the proposal?

Identifying the audience

Understand the audience you are writing to, i.e. the folks who will read and score the proposal.

WHOM WILL READ THE PROPOSAL?

- ✦ Whom are you writing for?
 - Specialists
 - Generalists
- ✦ How do you know?
 - Read the RFP
 - Check out the agencies web site
 - Talk to the Program Officer

WHO WILL READ THE PROPOSAL?

- ✦ Why are they reading it?
 - Pre-proposal
 - Main proposal
 - Resubmit
- ✦ How (fast) are they reading it?
 - They don't let moss grow!

WRITING

Things to think about that
relate to who is reading
your proposal

Why Are You Writing the Proposal?

- ✦ University/College
 - Scholarly activity for dossier
 - Qualification for matching funds
- ✦ Personal
 - Planning
- ✦ Agency

Rhetoric

1. The art of speaking or writing effectively: as
 - a) the study of principles and rules of composition formulated by critics of ancient times
 - b) the study of writing or speaking as a means of communication or persuasion**
2. Insincere or grandiloquent* language
 - * a lofty, extravagantly colorful, pompous, or bombastic style, manner, or quality especially in language

NOT

Rhetorical Goals of Proposals

- ✦ Exposition – explanation/narration
 - Clarity
 - Conciseness
 - Coherence
- ✦ Persuasion – your idea interesting, novel, sound, doable & meets the agency's goals
 - Organization
 - Logical bridges
- ✦ Credentialing – experience, skills, abilities to complete the project
 - Accuracy

Subsections

- ✦ Overview
- ✦ Literature review
- ✦ Proposed study
- ✦ Pilot data/Preliminary Work
- ✦ Budget

What rhetorical goals should be highlighted in each?

Rhetorical Goals of Subsections

- ✦ Overview
 - Persuasion
- ✦ Literature review
 - Exposition
 - Credentialing
- ✦ Proposed study
 - Persuasion
 - Credentialing

Rhetorical Goals of Subsections

- ✦ Pilot data/Preliminary Work
 - Credentialing
 - Persuasion
- ✦ Budget
 - Credentialing

Writing Tips

- ✦ Use forceful, positive language; no passive voice or weasel words
- ✦ Make it readable--short sentences & paragraphs, heads & bullets, white space
- ✦ Present information in several ways

Writing Tips

- ✦ Each piece, each word, must lead to the conclusion – there is a need/problem and this project and investigator/team will solve it if the resources are given
- ✦ Use key words from the application guidelines (RFP) and reviewer evaluation forms

Useful Tools

✦ Outlines

- Outlines
- Outlines

✦ Peer review

- Specialist
- Generalist
- Reviewers (resubmission)

✦ Multiple Drafts

Old school reviewers

- print out proposal
- use stickies & highlighters,
- pull pages apart to ensure all pieces of proposal match

New school reviewers

- use electronic technology and conduct key word searches –if RFP asks for
 - ✦ milestones and writer uses benchmarks
 - ✦ transformational results are expected and writer uses significant long-term outcomes
 - ✦ requirement for matching support and writers use cost sharing

Your proposal may receive negative scores

Winner of “Most Drafts Written Award” PWI 2003



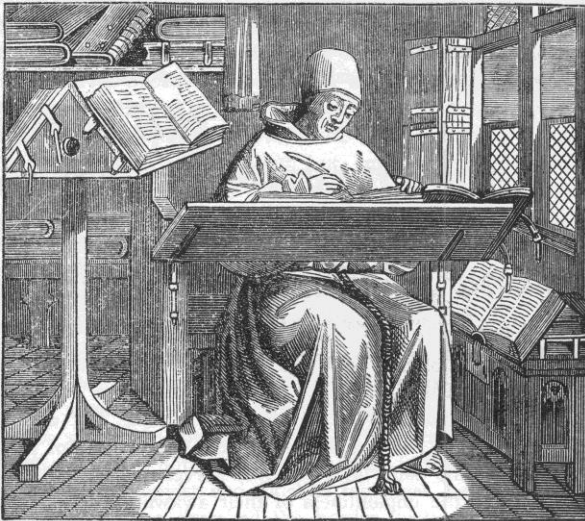
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Halpern, A. R. & Blackburn, T. R. (2005). The rhetoric of the grant proposal. *Council on Undergraduate Research Quarterly*, 25, 187-190



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Questions?

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