How to Write and Submit an NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (_DDRIG) Proposal

Miriam Golden
University of California at Los Angeles

January 2016
Why Write an NSF Proposal

- Search committees place weight on fund-raising ability;
- Fund-raising is more difficult now than ever before;
- Submitting successful grant proposals takes practice;
- You might as well begin early;
- Money raises money;
- An NSF may permit you to collect data or undertake research that would not otherwise be possible;
- This may improve your dissertation or other research activities.
What Will the NSF Fund?

- Research that would not otherwise be possible:
  - Data collection;
  - Field research.

- What can you budget for?
  - The actual costs associated with data collection and/or field research;
  - Your support during the period of field research;
  - You cannot support yourself while in residence at your home institution.

The Process

- Only academic institutions are authorized to submit NSF proposals;
- Grants are submitted through the UCLA Office of Contract and Grant Administration (OCGA) or other authorized administrative unit;
- If you are a UCLA political science department graduate student, your contact person for assistance and submission is Tana Wong (tanawong@ucla.edu), Chief Administrative Officer, Social Sciences Grant Support;
- If you are a graduate student at another institution, you need to identify your local staff person;
- At UCLA your proposal is officially submitted to the NSF via SSGS or OCGA by the Principal Investigator (P.I.);  
  - However, only Tana can execute the final submission of your proposal;
- Only a faculty member can serve as P.I.;
- Your P.I. should be your dissertation advisor.
Planning Time Required for an NSF DDRIG

- Writing an NSF proposal takes a minimum of four to six weeks lead time;
- You need to start very early in order to assemble all the necessary paperwork and to coordinate with your advisor;
- The proposal requires that your advisors submit certain documents, including a biographical sketch that is formatted according to NSF specifics;
- To meet the June 15 submission deadline, you should have a complete proposal drafted by around June 1;
- After your proposal is drafted, you will work with staff and with your advisor on the complex paperwork that must accompany your proposal;
- Tana can assist with your budget and other paperwork.
The Steps: Part 1

2. Print it out and read it carefully, highlighting pertinent material;
4. Consult with your supervisor and with Tana;
5. Review other successful proposals;
6. Write your proposal...
The Steps: Part 2

7. Seek and obtain approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if human subjects are involved and possibly IRB exemption otherwise;
   ▶ Your IRB process must also be initiated by your P.I.;

8. Obtain written documentation regarding hosting institution, collaborations, or other auxiliary resources;

9. Obtain a letter of endorsement from your advisor;

10. Obtain other required paperwork from your advisor;

11. Finalize and submit your proposal and all necessary paperwork well in advance of the deadline.
The Documents

1. One page project summary:
   ▶ Overview;
   ▶ Statement on the intellectual merit of the proposed activity;
   ▶ Statement on the broader impacts of the proposed activity.

2. Project description (10 page max);

3. Data management plan.
Project Description: Format

- Ten page maximum, using:
  - Arial, Courier New, or Palatino Linotype at a font size of 10 points or larger;
  - Times New Roman at a font size of 11 points or larger; or
  - Computer Modern family of fonts at a font size of 11 points or larger;
  - With one-inch margins on all four sides.
Project Description: Content

- Statement of the research problem, specific aims, expectations, propositions or hypotheses;
- Including:
  - Statement of broader impacts;
- Review of the literature and significance;
- Preliminary studies by the student, if any (which can show feasibility of research and/or preliminary findings);
- Research Plan, including:
  - Research Design, with an explicit rationale defending choices in the design;
  - Research Site or source of data;
  - Data analysis plans (note that references are as important in the section on methods as in theory);
- Research Schedule.
Other Required Documents

1. Cover sheet;
2. List of suggested reviewers or reviewers not to include;
   ▶ Do not include any.
3. A number of institutional certifications (to be signed by the P.I.);
4. References;
5. Biographical sketches (max two pages each for P.I. and student, organized according to NSF instructions);
6. Budget (max $15,000 direct costs plus 53% indirect costs);
7. Budget justification;
8. Current and pending support (of P.I. and the student), including the current proposal;
9. Facilities, equipment, and other resources;
10. Data management plan;
11. Letter of endorsement from your advisor.
Optional and Other Documents

1. IRB approval;
2. Letter of invitation or collaboration from host institution(-s);
3. Appendices (only with permission of the Program Officer).
Submission Mechanism

- Use of FastLane required;
- To obtain a Fast Lane ID, please follow instructions provided by Tana;
- Your faculty advisory must set up the proposal and list you as co-PI for you to access the paperwork;
- Administrative unit must be Poli Sci.
What to Send Tana to Obtain a Fastlane ID

1. First Name
2. Middle Initial
3. Last Name
4. Suffix (Jr., Sr., III)
5. E-mail address
6. Business Phone
7. Fax Number
8. Department
9. Street Address
10. City, State, Zip
11. Degree Type
12. Degree Year
Decision and Funding Mechanisms

- NSF DDRIG are highly competitive;
- Your proposal will be reviewed by three faculty members chosen with knowledge of your subject and/or regional area, as well as by an NSF Political Science panel;
- You and your advisor will probably hear (by email) in October or November;
- Your grant will be active as of about six months after the submission date;
- You cannot spend any of your funds until the grant begins;
- Your grant period is a maximum of one year;
- All funds must be expended within this period;
- It is trivial to request and receive a one-year no-cost extension;
- Regulations regarding allowable expenses are rigid and precise;
- Anyone receiving a DDRIG should meet with office staff to review spending requirements.