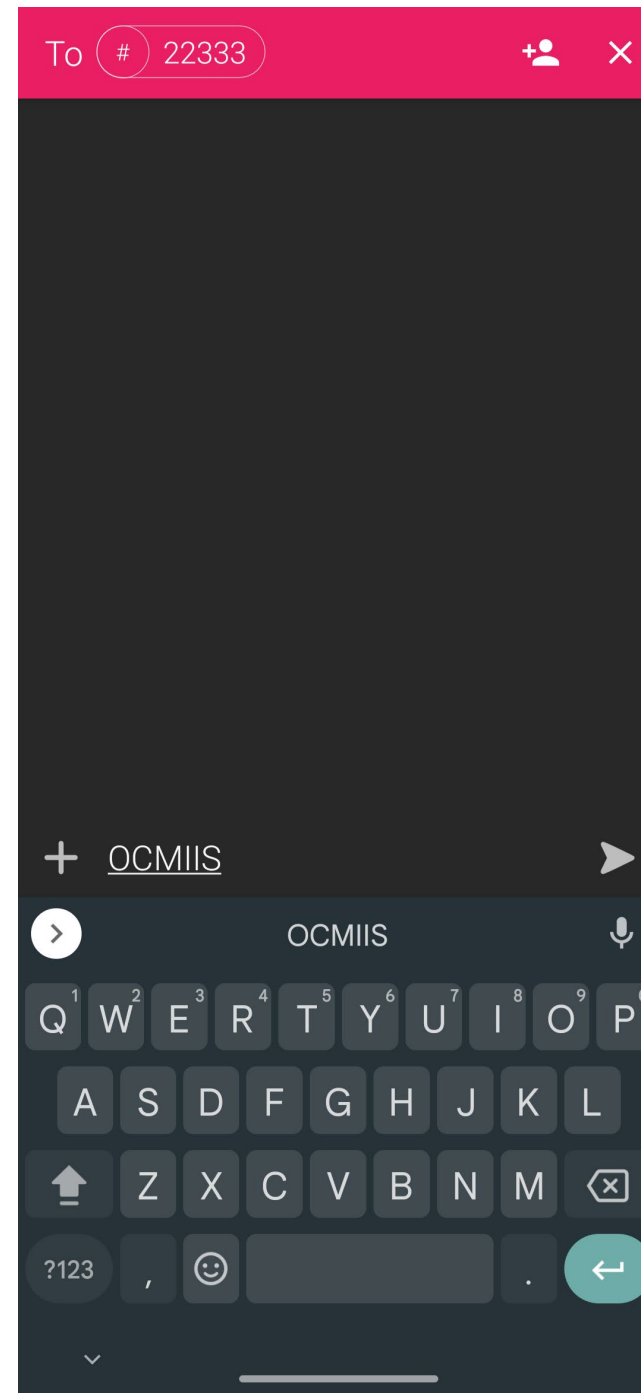# Grant Writing Best Practices

Whitney Jenkins

North Carolina Coastal Reserve, Division of Coastal Management

Interactive Polling

To: 22233

Message: OCMIIS

What is your experience with grant writing?

A - Expert - I have been part of many proposals that have received funding

B - Intermediate - I have been part of a proposal that may or may not have gotten funded

C - Beginner - I have limited experience with grant proposals

D - Novice - I have never been part of a proposal writing process

Effective program planning

Vs.

Chasing the dollar

One way…

Find Funding Source

↓

Read RFP

↓

Submit Proposal

↓

Repeat

Perhaps a better way…

Organizational Plan & Capacity

↓

Identification of a Problem

↓

Design a Project

↓

Research Funding Sources

↓

Analyze RFP

↓

Create Proposal

↓

Repeat

Organizational Plan

Me trying to explain to funders how our missions are aligned
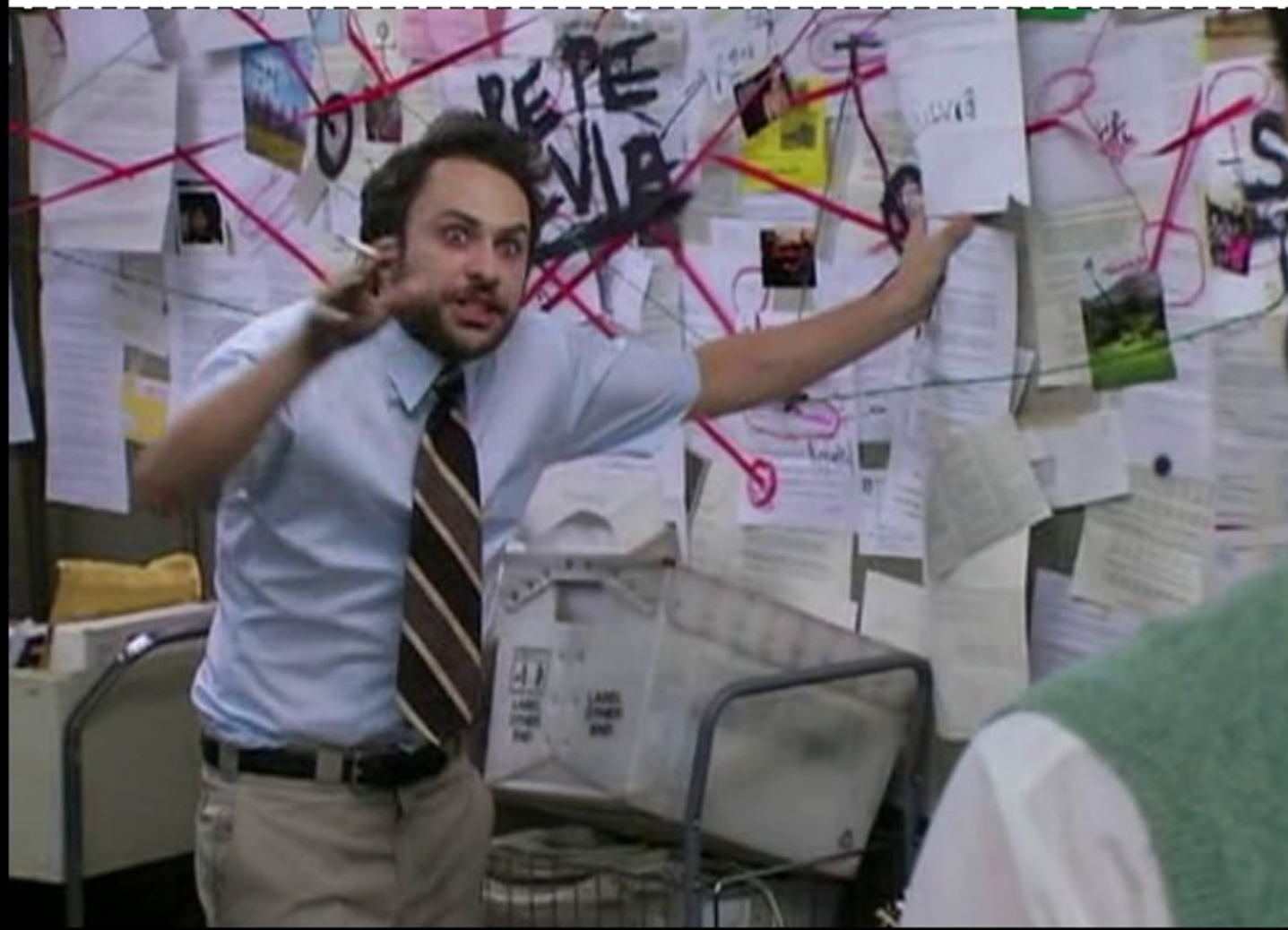
What documents does your organization have that can help justify your project?

What is my organization's capacity?

Identification of a Problem

What problems are you trying to solve through external funding?

Design a Project

Preparation:
Research, Planning & Coordination

Writing

SOMETIMES PREPARING
A GRANT PROPOSAL
FEELS LIKE

HERDING CATS

There's no feeling in the world like it

What are some best practices when collaborating with others?

- Use a shared space for collaboration such as Google Drive, Microsoft SharePoint, or Basecamp

- Make sure the roles and expectations for your project team are clear

- Use meeting polls such as Doodle or When2Meet to schedule team meetings more easily

- Virtual meetings might make collaboration easier, if everyone does not work in the same space

Research Funding Sources

Funding & Assistance for Coastal Resilience

Adaptation and resilience building efforts for North Carolina's coastal communities can come in many forms (e.g., structural or non-structural), occur at different times (e.g., pre- or post-disaster), and build off existing efforts or be part of a new endeavor. Thinking in terms of adaptation and resilience can help communities connect the dots to achieve multiple goals simultaneously by leveraging multiple funding sources and types of assistance.

Pieces of the Puzzle

Overview	DCM/CAMA	Local	State/Non-Federal	Federal

Other Sources, Partners & Assistance	Training
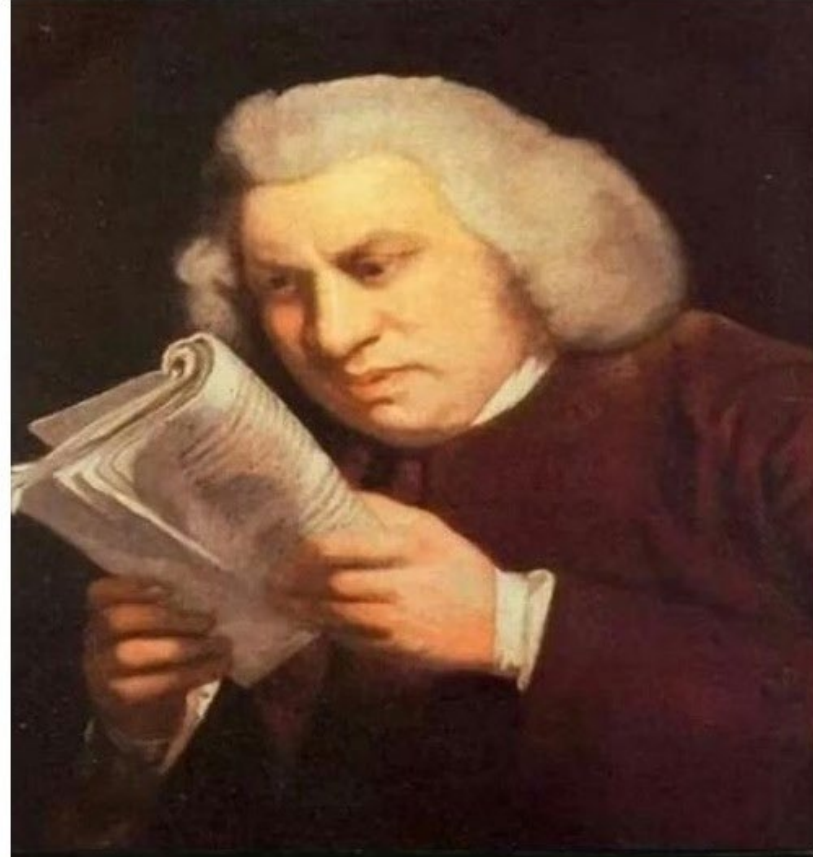
Create your proposal

What tools or strategies do you use when beginning to write a proposal?

What tools or strategies do you use when beginning to write a proposal?

- Recycle relevant content you have written in the past
- Have a brainstorming session with staff to get ideas about your project
- Create a narrative of the vision for the project to use when communicating with partners or creating buy in with end users
- Break the application down by the sections found in the RFP, use as an outline to begin the proposal writing process
- Create a task timeline to ensure everything gets accomplished by the RFP deadline, include people responsible for each task
- Create a list of questions as you work through the proposal, so that you can consolidate your communications with the funder and partners

Letters of Support

- From partners, collaborators, or end users supporting the implementation of your project
- Provide a letter template for them to customize on their letterhead

- The budget is an important piece of your proposal because it shows the funder exactly what their money will be used for

- Link the budget to your project storyboard

- Use as specific costs as possible, don't make numbers up

- Matching funds? In-kind match?

- Eligible expenses?

- Use the budget narrative to explain how you arrived at your proposal budget and expense categories

- Check and double check that the numbers in your budget spreadsheet match the budget numbers in your project narrative

Assemble and Polish

- Follow the RFP directions – especially about page limits and formatting
- Sometimes funders will include a check list for required elements, use every tool available!
- Once assembled, see if someone will read the entire proposal cover to cover, ideally someone who is not involved in drafting the proposal
- Be mindful about internal review deadlines for approving the proposal or budget

What is an intangible quality of a good grant proposal? That is, something that isn't explicitly mentioned in the RFP.
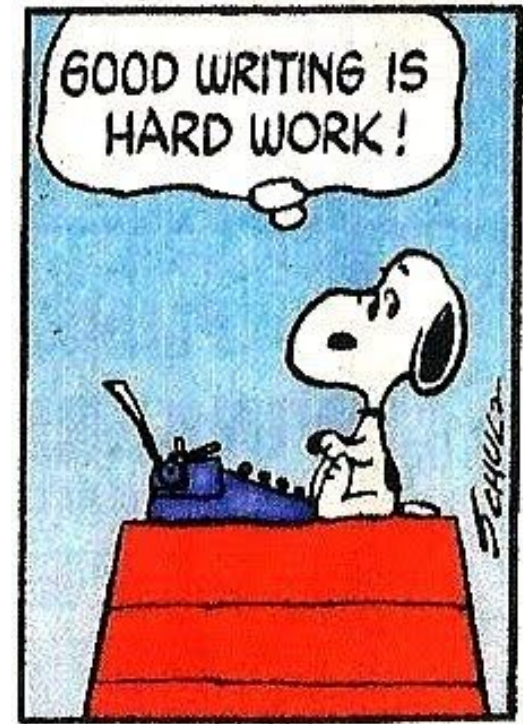
Intangible Qualities of Successful Applicants

- Clear vision that connects the organization's goals to the funder's priorities
- Know the funder
- Stay organized and delegate strategically
- Know the field and explain how team members are qualified to lead this project
- Technologically savvy
- Write clearly and concisely
- Practice integrity in budget preparation
- Keep up with the news
- Demonstrate passion
- Demonstrate collaboration
- Show potential for sustainability of your organization to complete the tasks outlined in the proposal

Clear Writing Checklist

- Read what you write aloud to catch clumsy language
- Avoid slang and imprecise terminology, including contractions and jargon
- Spell out acronyms the first time you use them
- Don't exaggerate; use appropriate statistics, facts, etc.
- Show, don't tell. Back up your assertions with citations and specific data and facts.
- Have grammar, thesaurus, and dictionary references available to use.
- Use the active voice
- Limit adjective (over)use – less is more. Say precisely what you mean.
- Ask someone else to read your proposal
- The Elements of Style by Strunk and White – a must-have resource for any writer

DON'T GIVE UP