



SRA INTERNATIONAL  
ANNUAL MEETING

**SEATTLE 2023**

OCTOBER 14-18

# Punching Up

## Moving Beyond Just Submitting a Proposal

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**Modify our tools and mindset to transition  
from 'submitting a proposal' to 'submitting  
a winning proposal'**

## Two areas of concentration:

- 1) Change in philosophy
- 2) Change in tools

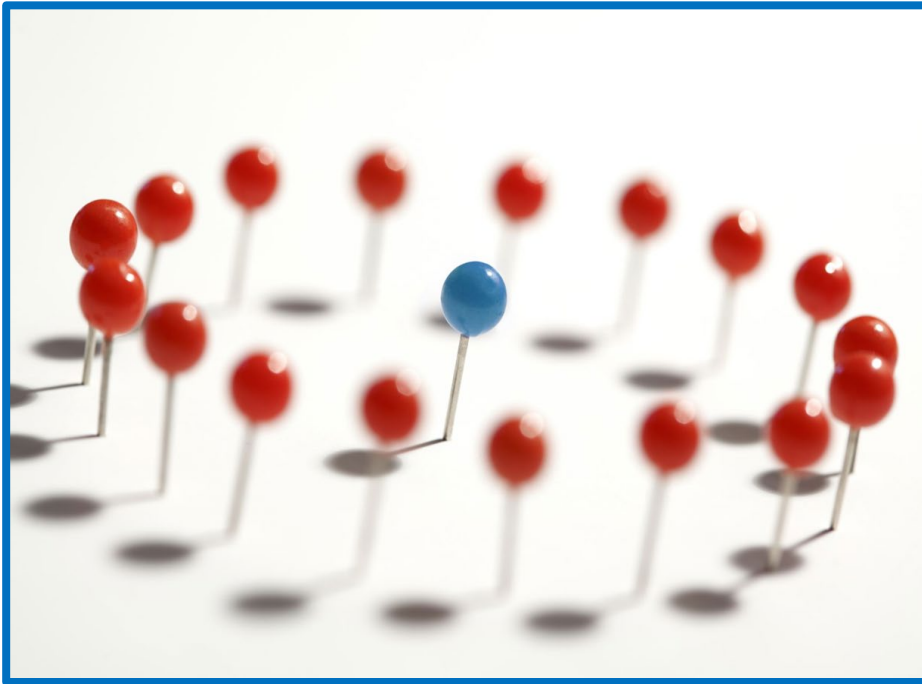
# Proposal Philosophy

## Competitive Advantage

- Changes to workflow and work patterns
- New tools
- Persuasive proposals
- Win themes
- Added value
- Continuous improvement

**We understand some faculty will be more receptive than others**

## Submitting Proposals as the Research Administrator



What value are we adding to winning the proposal

# Tools and Templates

There is no perfect template nor tool. Use the templates and tools that work for you and your team.

Most project management books and software tools are not well suited for the academic environment.

Our goal is to offer a shift in the philosophy of proposal development, and some tools to help get you started down that path. We cannot offer a set of perfect checklists and templates. We aren't that good.

# Academic Environment – “let the science speak for itself”

[1. Introduction to Application \(for Resubmission and Revision applications\)](#)

## [Research Plan Section](#)

[2. Specific Aims](#)

[3. Research Strategy](#)

[4. Progress Report Put](#)

## [Other Research Plan Section](#)

[5. Vertebrate Animals](#)

[6. Select Agent Research](#)

[7. Multiple PD/PI Leadership Plan](#)

[8. Consortium/Contractual Arrangements](#)

[9. Letters of Support](#)

[10. Resource Sharing Plan\(s\)](#)

[11. Other Plan\(s\)](#)

[12. Authentication of Key Biological and/or Chemical Resources](#)

## 10. Facilities & Other Resources

### Format:

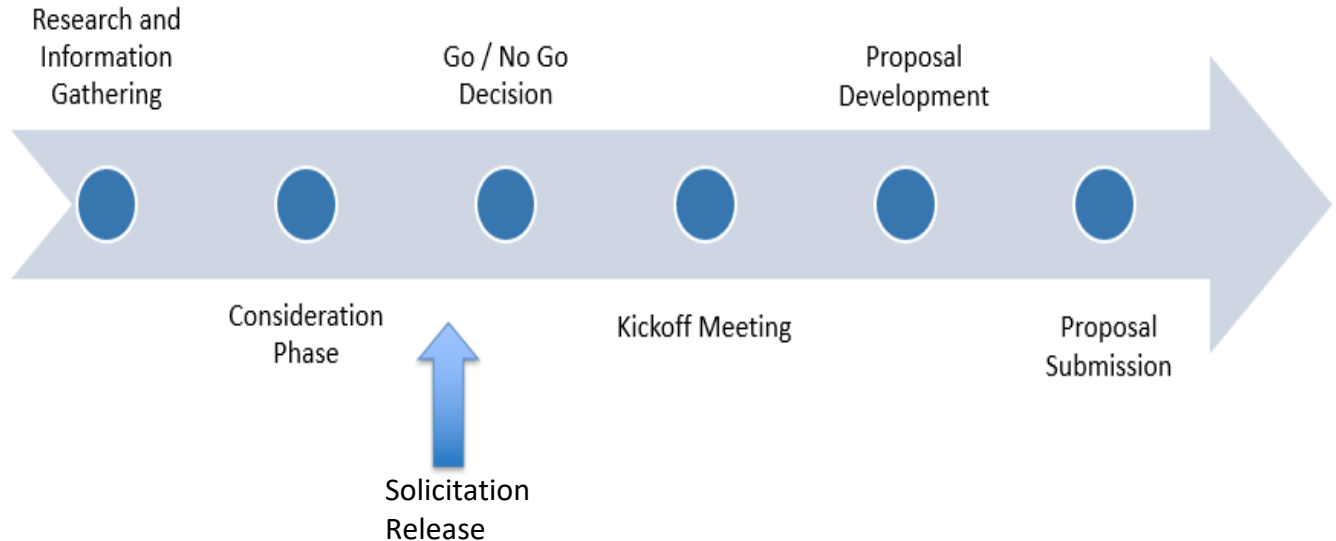
The “Facilities & Other Resources” attachment is required unless otherwise specified in the FOA. Use of URLs and hyperlinks in this section is not allowed unless specified in the funding opportunity announcement.

### Content:

Describe how the scientific environment in which the research will be done contributes to the probability of success (e.g., institutional support, physical resources, and intellectual rapport). In describing the scientific environment in which the work will be done, discuss ways in which the proposed studies will benefit from unique features of the scientific environment or from unique subject populations or how studies will employ useful collaborative arrangements.

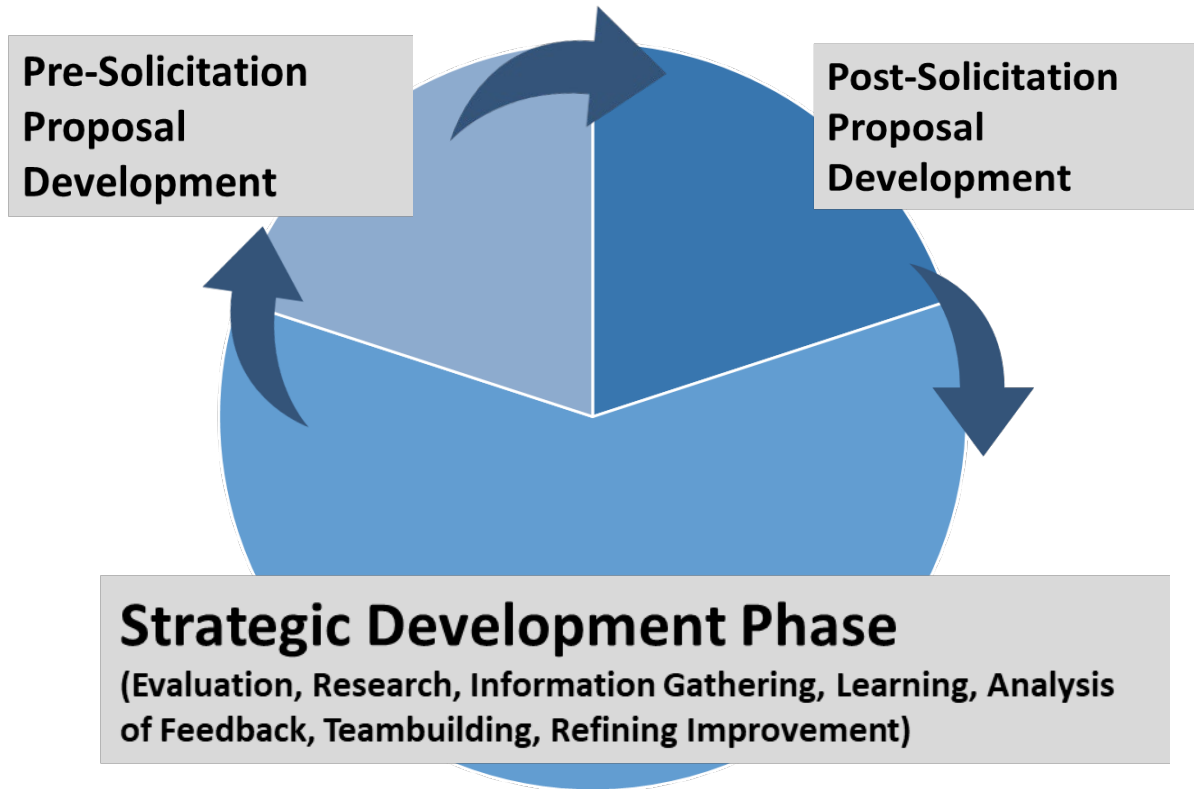
## Many opportunities to advocate for the science

# Traditional Proposal Development Timeline





# Our View of the Proposal Development Timeline



# Proposal Development Timeline as an RA

- DCL/NOSI/RFI engagement
- Make introductions and connections
- Limited submission or pre-proposal work
- Be thoughtful when updating proposal docs
- Pick the area that's most interesting and jump in  
(Data, impact, tools, team-building, equipment, training, institutional strengths)

# Tools – Our Vision

STEP IN THE PROCESS	TOOL
<u>Strategic Development Phase</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraging and appropriately applying feedback from previous submissions</li> </ul>	Evaluation Matrix
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leveraging <u>institutional strength</u> and mitigating weaknesses relative to the solicitation</li> </ul>	Self scouting matrix
<u>Pre-Solicitation Phase</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consideration Phase</li> </ul>	Consideration Phase Checklist
<u>Post-Solicitation Phase</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go / No Go</li> </ul>	Go / No Go Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kickoff Meeting</li> </ul>	Kickoff Meeting Checklist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposal Development</li> </ul>	Supplemental Document Checklist

# Self-Scouting Form

Questions for Research Team	Research Administration Development and Considerations
<b>Who</b>	
Who are the researchers on your proposal?	1) Documents that align with these questions: Biosketch, Multi-PI Plan, Facilities/Research Environment, Post-Doc Training Plan, Subaward SOI/SOW, LOS, Broader Impacts
Who are your students (institutionally and personally)? What is unique about them?	Other points to consider:
Who are your research partners on this effort? How often do you characterize this relationship? How often do you meet/collaborate/present/publish together?	1) Why did the Chair hire these people?
What about these people and organizations is unique or outstanding? What brought this team together? Is it viable?	Who are their other collaborators?
Who do you feel especially capable of reaching through Broader Impacts?	1) How and where do they disseminate their findings?
<b>What</b>	
What are your institution and its partners known for at a macro-level (beyond your team and department)?	1) Documents that align with these questions: Facilities/Research Environment, LOS
What essential resources or equipment is available to your team?	Other points to consider:
What valuable and unique resources or equipment is available to your team?	1) Recommendations to the Chair
What might a reviewer see as the weaknesses of your research environment?	2) New grant proposals to fill in gaps
	3) What topic fits this team the best?
<b>When</b>	
Does your team include early career researchers? How do you plan to highlight this in the proposal?	1) Documents that align with these questions: ESI, Biosketch, NSF COA/USDA COI
Does your team include researchers with especially long track records or experience that has intersected with key moments/research in this field?	Other points to consider:
Is there unique value of doing this work now (to the world outside of your team)?	1) Measuring publication impact: <a href="https://researchguides.unc.edu/it/impact">https://researchguides.unc.edu/it/impact</a>
Should this proposal be submitted at a later cycle or in response to a different RFP?	2) Is this the right team for this work, or are they trying to get in on a hot topic at the right time: "Gut bug" bandwagon
	3) Start with a Fellowship proposal?
<b>Where</b>	
Are you located in an EPSCoR state?	1) Documents that align with these questions: Facilities/Research Environment, Subaward SOI/SOW, Multi-PI Plan, Travel justification, Postdoc Training Plan
Do you have international partners? Are there particular reasons to highlight these partnerships?	Other Points to Consider:
Is your team's location relevant to the project?	1) Search the web for geographic hubs for this kind of work?
Is there anything unique or especially advantageous to the locations involved in the work your team is proposing?	2) <a href="https://reporter.nih.gov/">https://reporter.nih.gov/</a> and <a href="https://new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/epscor/stat-e-websites">https://new.nsf.gov/funding/initiatives/epscor/stat-e-websites</a>
<b>Why</b>	
Why is the lead institution serving as the lead on this proposal?	1) Documents that align with these questions: Collaborative Arrangements, Aims, Multi-PI Plan, Budget and justification, LOS
Why should the sponsor fund the project you're proposing rather than other work in this field? Why does the sponsor fund projects in these areas generally? Does this project fit that motivation?	Other points to consider:
Why should the sponsor select your institution to do this work rather than other similar institutions?	1) Success rate for your PI, graduate programs
Why should the sponsor select your institution to do this work rather than vastly different institution?	2) PO feedback, OVP support, K-type award
<b>How</b>	
How can you mitigate areas a reviewer might identify as weaknesses?	Documents that align with these questions: Checklists, emails, letters, short paragraphs, iterations

# Self-Scouting Form

# You, the RA, are the most objective

- Consider Broader Impacts!
- Identify opportunities in each doc
- Evaluate team strengths and weaknesses
- Seek institutional support – Chair, VPR, or pilot programs

# Win Themes

Clear and memorable messages that distinguish your proposal from the field and demonstrate to the reviewer why it, specifically, should be funded.

Unique characteristics to your team that others cannot say.

Introduce them early, develop them fully, then reiterate each of them throughout the proposal in a way that is concise, clear, and consistent.

Low Risk – Advantageous Geography – Unique equipment and facilities – Exceptional diversity – Collaborations with community and industry – Unique team – Value of impact – Innovative approach – Relevant prior success

# Unfunded

# Submission

# Scoring

# Review Sheet

	REVIEWER #1	REVIEWER #2	REVIEWER #3	REVIEWER #4
OVERALL RATING/ CRITERIA SCORES				

## Area of Significant Agreement (Strengths)

Reviewer #1	Reviewer #2	Reviewer #3	Reviewer #4

Analysis and Recommendation:

## Area of Significant Agreement (Weaknesses)

Reviewer #1	Reviewer #2	Reviewer #3	Reviewer #4

Analysis and Recommendation:

## Area of Significant Disagreement

Reviewer #1	Reviewer #2	Reviewer #3	Reviewer #4

Analysis and Recommendation:



# Unfunded Submission Scoring Review Sheet

## Area of Significant Disagreement

Reviewer #1	Reviewer #2	Reviewer #3
The idea to extend the monitoring and evaluation phase to ten years, beyond the period required in the RFP is a great idea that should provide valuable data for similar programs across the country.	Collecting data for years 6-10 will be difficult and probably not worth it.	Plan to collect and analyze data beyond mandatory period will be especially informative.

Analysis and Recommendation: There is some disagreement about the value of extending the monitoring and evaluation period. Two out of three reviewers appreciated the plan, one disagreed. Addressing this as a weakness may sacrifice point others saw as a strength. Discuss this point thoroughly, it may be worth ignoring this negative feedback.

# Consideration Phase Checklist

Discussion Point	Research Administrator Keys	Follow-Up Plan	Responsible Party
<b>Submission Type</b>			
<p>What kind of submission is this (new, resubmission, renewal)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>New:</b> What is the status of our team's relevant prior work or funding in the field? Is this a sound foundation from which to pursue this opportunity, or is there a more attainable or sensible intermediary step?</li> <li><b>Renewal:</b> Frank discussion of how the previous project went, and how it was perceived by the funder. Have we had any indication the funder wants us to bid again? Would a change in partners help the submission?</li> <li><b>Resubmission:</b> Was our previous submission scored? If it wasn't scored, what substantial changes will be proposed to significantly improve our odds of getting funding? If it was scored, has someone completed a <i>Unfunded Submission Scoring Review Sheet</i>? Are we proposing major changes based on reviewer feedback? Is there a consensus around that feedback? Did different reviewers feel differently about key themes? Is the entire team confident we are responding appropriately to reviewer feedback?</li> </ul>	<p>Reiterate win themes in proposal emails and correspondence regarding proposal documents.</p> <p><a href="https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm">https://report.nih.gov/award/index.cfm</a></p> <p>Review awards from previous cycle(s)</p> <p>What updates proposal documents with new publications, data, infrastructure.</p>		
<b>Understanding the Opportunity</b>			
<p>What would an ideal lead organization look like for this opportunity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have we completed a <i>Self-Scouting Form</i>? How does this intersect with the profile we've generated of ourselves from our <i>Self-Scouting Form</i>?</li> </ul> <p>Do we know an organization closer to this profile to whom we could serve as a valuable subcontractor?</p>	<p><i>Self-Scouting Form</i> should include all necessary notes.</p> <p>Is our planned submission truly responsive to what the funder wants.</p>		
<p>How many proposals is the offeror looking to fund?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is there reason to think the funder already knows who they want to fund?</li> </ul>	<p>Work during the institutional (limited submissions) review should answer this. Is this work useful?</p>		
<p>Is this an entirely new opportunity?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If this is a follow-on, what do we know about how the early round(s) went?</li> </ul> <p>Are there key differences we can spot? What can we make of these changes?</p>	<p>Were there pilot projects and what preliminary data? Was this lab/team responsive to RFI/DCL/NOSI?</p> <p>What goes in the CPS/Biosketch to verify the track record?</p>		
<b>Our Team</b>			
<p>Does this opportunity call for significant collaboration outside of our institution (other academic institutions, national labs, established industry, startups, international collaboration)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What is the present status of our relationship with potential key partners? Can we get these relationships to where they need to be with the time we have?</li> </ul>	<p>Do you have a list of your Department or School's regular collaborators?</p> <p>What's the lead time for subaward docs for your current collaborators or to attain a quote?</p>		
<p>Do we need information from stakeholders at other institutions, or team members that aren't present to decide whether or not to pursue this opportunity?</p>	<p>Does your Chair want you to do this?</p>		
<p>Do we have concerns about limitations to the team's bandwidth and their impact on our capacity to produce a strong proposal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principal Investigator</li> <li>Non-PI key personnel with critical subject matter expertise</li> <li>Research Administrators</li> </ul> <p>Proposal development professionals</p>	<p>Who is your back-up and how much support do you have internally? Which documents need to be updated and to what end or what capacity?</p>		

# Consideration Phase Checklist

# What to consider as an RA

- Where is my Post-Award nightmare
- What do we know – impact, geography, previous awards
- Identify opportunities in each proposal document
- What went well in previous submission
- What role do we really play in this application

# Go / No Go Checklist

Discussion Point	LRA Keys	Follow-Up Plan	Responsible Party
<b>Competition</b>			
What do we know about the competition? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much, how strong?</li> <li>• Are there incumbents?</li> <li>• Solicitation targets?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Type of institution, location</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Where do we expect to fit in this array?</li> <li>• Will the geography of the competition matter? Will it help or hurt?</li> <li>• Strength of our team, reputation in the field, community connections, fit for the solicitation?</li> </ul>	Meaningful data we can provide - Proposal limits (CTSI), incumbents (RePORTER), competitive budget limitations (your post-award nightmare?)		
<b>Capacity</b>			
Do we have the internal bandwidth to do devote to doing this well? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Principal Investigator</li> <li>• Non-PI key personnel with critical subject matter expertise</li> <li>• Research Administrators</li> <li>• Proposal development professionals</li> </ul> Who is training who in this grant? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What techniques and curriculum are being used?</li> </ul>	Cost of time, other proposal timelines, submission portal, state of proposal docs.  Can this team/lab accommodate all that they say they are going to do? Can the students do what is being asked?		
<b>Collaborations</b>			
Does this opportunity call for significant collaboration outside of our institution (other academic institutions, national labs, established industry, startups, international collaboration)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the present status of our relationship with potential key partners?</li> <li>• Can we get these relationships to where they need to be with the time we have?               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Will these ultimately appear as strengths or weaknesses of the proposal?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is this Cooperative Agreement really what we want?</li> </ul>	Is the relationship with external organization good enough to get documents quickly? How flexible are they? Will this Cooperative Agreement change how you budget?		
<b>Goals</b>			
What is our real goal for this submission? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Winning</u>: What do we think our odds are: average, better, worse? What are the most influential factors in setting these odds?</li> <li>• <u>Soliciting feedback for a future submission</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ This is the time for bold ideas we want objective consideration of. How can we ensure we generate actionable feedback on our thought-provoking ideas, and not generic, unhelpful feedback on the overall quality of our product?</li> <li>◦ Risks: Path dependency around an underdeveloped idea; future reliance on lesser quality written content; reputational impact in the eyes of the funder.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	If the goal is intelligence gathering, new biosketches and supplemental documents should be produced targeting this goal. Pie in the sky proposal		
<b>Feasibility</b>			
Is our planned submission truly responsive to what the funder expects to fund?			
How are we going to overcome complications and setbacks?			
Are there any conceivable post-award complications associated with this project?			

# Go / No Go Checklist

# RA in the time of Go/No Go

- What is the goal and should 'we' be doing this
- Is this project feasible at this moment – what needs to be in place for me, the research team, the students, the institution
- Do we have the bandwidth?

# Kickoff Meeting Checklist

Principal Investigator:
Funder and FOA Link
Letter of Intent Due:
Internal Due Date:
Funder's Due Date:

Proposal Component	Person Responsible	Notes
Develop and Disseminate Proposal Development Checklist	Research Admin	
Letter of Intent		
Project Abstract		
Project Narrative		
Bibliography/ References Cited		
Facilities and Other Resources		
R&R Senior Personnel Forms (Biosketch & COA)		
Budget		
Budget Justifications		
Research Plan		
Multi-PI Plan		
Consortium/Contractual Agreements		
Letters of Support		
Resources Sharing Plan		

## Kickoff Meeting Project Management Keys

	Notes
<b>Pre-Meeting Responsibilities</b>	
Email Introductions	
Email Agenda	
<b>Meeting Responsibilities</b>	
Assign faculty member as responsible for every budgetary and narrative component	
Review proposal goals (including secondary goals aside from winning funding)	
Determine which key stakeholders are not present, understand their roles	
Review and discuss win themes, reach preliminary consensus	
Determine and address impediments to starting any proposal component right now	
Proposal development risks: what can go wrong and what can we do about it?	
Establish communication plan: meetings, note taking, and follow-up responsibilities	
Develop review plan to check for comprehensive and responsive submission	
Develop copy editing plan	
Discuss sustainability, dissemination, and broader impacts, note any consensus	
<b>Post-Meeting Responsibilities</b>	
Email meeting attendees with updated proposal documents (checklists, timelines, etc.) and reminders about next steps, responsibilities, next meetings and steps	
Outreach plan re: consultants and third parties (external evaluators, editors and writing support, industry partners, EAB member, etc.)	



# Kickoff Meeting Checklist

# RA at the Kick Off Meeting

- Design winning proposal documents
  - SOI/SOW/LOS/LOI
- Focus communications on competitiveness
- Organize each document to promote win themes
- Leave nothing to chance in the budget

# Supplemental Document Checklist

Supplemental Documents Checklist	
<b>Outreach:</b>	Engage experts at your institution or its partners: research development, evaluation centers, data librarians, senior researchers, postdoc office
<b>Principles:</b>	Tailored specific to the submission, reader-friendly, consistent across the entire team, and uniform – look like a professional outfit and a safe bet to fund
Document	Notes
<b>Facilities</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standardize formatting across all sections (schools, labs, departments)</li> <li>Standardize formatting across all institutional partners</li> <li>Streamline and remove redundancies</li> <li>Fully tailor—using a prior submission is not a competitive advantage</li> <li>Draft a new introductory section tailored specifically to this funding mechanism and introducing unique and exceptional institutional attributes relevant to the project – this is another opportunity to persuade reviewers</li> <li>Include programs, centers, institutes, not just facilities and equipment</li> <li>Is our geography relevant to this program?</li> </ul>	
<b>Evaluation Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External evaluator, institutional evaluator, evaluation within team?</li> <li>Engage with evaluation expert early and often</li> <li>Does evaluation plan address non-research components (broader impacts)?</li> <li>Can our project improve itself from the findings during the funding period?</li> <li>Should the plan run beyond the funding period?</li> </ul>	
<b>Multi-PI Leadership Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does program leadership span institutional divides?</li> <li>Does the leadership structure represent the diversity of the team and is it constructed to grow and benefit from this diversity?</li> <li>Is there a plan for incorporating junior researchers?</li> <li>Is there a plan to rotate leadership positions during the funding period?</li> </ul>	
<b>Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carefully tailor—using a prior submission is not a competitive advantage</li> <li>Leverage interinstitutional and interdisciplinary opportunities across the team</li> <li>Ingrain individualized development into the postdoc plan and program</li> </ul>	
<b>Data Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect with institutional expert as soon as possible (ex: data librarian)</li> <li>Carefully tailor—using a prior submission is not a competitive advantage</li> </ul>	
<b>Dissemination Plan</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Make clear how to replicate this process with all of the steps involved</li> <li>Who will use this process and how will we reach them?</li> <li>How will we know is our dissemination has been successful?</li> <li>Inform and re-inform</li> <li>Schedule of events and deliverables with dates</li> </ul>	

# Supplemental Document Checklist

# THANK YOU!

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