Understanding a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) – Continued

The following list of questions and tips will help you to deconstruct a Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA), also commonly known as a Request for Applications (RFA), Program Announcement (PA), and Request for Proposal (RFP).

Narrative Structure

- Are there required sections of the proposal narrative that are standard to this funding agency/mechanism? If so, refer to the agency's proposal guidelines document for more information (NIH SF424 R&R, NSF Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide (PAPPG)). It is important to familiarize yourself with these instructions, and to use them as a reference for each proposal. They are also a place to find rules regarding any significant changes to proposal format.

- Are there required or suggested subheadings? Funding opportunity announcements often provide information regarding the structure of your proposal.
- If there are not required subheadings, are there easily identifiable headings that can be gleaned from the review criteria (e.g., Significance, Goals, Broader Impacts, Evaluation)? NOTE: Required or suggested subheadings are sometimes found in agency instruction documents (i.e., NIH SF424 R&R, NSF PAPPG).
- Organize your proposal in the same format described or implied in the RFA.
- Reflect the language the funding agency uses to describe the program and its mission (check the agency's website). Use these keywords in your proposal.
- Subject headings, graphics, bullets, and bolded statements using language similar to that used in the FOA can all be used to make the reviewers' jobs easier as they assess how well the proposal meets review criteria.

Review Criteria

- What are the review criteria? Are there any special/unusual review criteria?
- It is particularly important to read the review criteria carefully when you respond to an RFA or Program Announcement (PA). Review criteria for "parent" or investigator-initiated announcements are typically found in agency submission regulations.

Special Sections Required

- What sections other than the main narrative are required? Examples include "Management Plan," "Postdoctoral Mentoring Plan," "Multi-PI Leadership Plan," "Protection of Human Subjects."
- Are there required letters of support/collaboration? Start the process of acquiring these letters early!
- Are appendix materials or supplementary documents allowed? If so, become familiar with what materials will/will not be accepted.

Additional Questions

- Contact Office of Grants and Contracts Administration assistance.

- It is not uncommon to find ambiguities or apparent contradictions within the RFA. If, after re-reading the announcement, you are still in doubt, ask questions! Contact the relevant program official with your specific question or concern and ask for clarification. Contacts are provided within the RFA. Ask early! Some funders have a deadline for the submission of questions.

For additional Information visit the [Office of Grants and Contracts Administration](#)