Dealing with Rejections and Revisions

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Based on previous work by Andrew Goodlife and others

The Hard Facts

- You will have proposals rejected and you may feel that the reviewer/panel have been unjust

- The only way to avoid rejection is not to submit anything

Who Here Has Been Rejected?

Take a moment to share your experience

What is the Process?

NSF

- Proposal is submitted
- Proposal is reviewed by program manager
  - It is possible to be rejected at this point (hopefully with some clues regarding how to resubmit)
- Proposal goes to reviewers
- Panel reviews the reviews
  - May reject without discussion
  - Rank after discussion
- Program officer makes funding recommendations
- NSF funds/rejects

What is the Process?

NSF Panels (USGS similar)
- Work hard to avoid conflict of interest
- Work hard to be fair to all proposals
  - We've all had proposals rejected

- Many quality proposals are not recommended

- At times the cutoff between recommended and not is very small

What is the Process?

- It is perfectly possible that a fantastic proposal might not be funded even with excellent reviews - Why?

- Proposal did not convey the awesomeness of the proposal

- Poor fit with RFP/call/funding agency

- Others may disagree about said awesomeness

So – you didn't get funded: welcome to the club!

So – you didn't get funded

So – you didn't get funded

- LEADERS SHARE AN EXPERIENCE HERE

What do you get?

- Program officer letter
- Panel summary (very useful)
  - Panel summary attempts to summarize the reviews and "neutralize" potentially unreasonable reviews
- Reviews

What do you do with this information?

- Take a moment to develop strategies individually

- Now share with a partner

- Report back to the group

Next Steps

- Take a deep breath
- Might be good to step away from the proposal for a few days
- Address all of the issues brought up – especially by the panel
- Remember – the job of the panel is to create a summary that will truly help the investigators
- Big picture: is this worth pursuing?

Make sure that you….

1. Specifically and directly address each review critique
2. Substantially revise, rewrite, or remove sections that were critiqued in earlier reviews.
3. Updates preliminary/pilot data and interpretations.
4. Incorporate new references that may have appeared since the previous submission (or were missed in the prior proposal).
5. Refined/revised list of potential reviewers based on reviews (some reading between the lines required).
6. Create a proposal that appears noticeably stronger than the prior version.

Complete your strategic plan worksheet

- What resources do you need to be successful?

- What are some potential funding sources for this research?

- What strategies will you apply to develop your proposal?

- If funded, what is the timeline for this research?

Other Things to Do

- Ask colleagues in the same field as you about expectations for proposals in your field

- Ask trusted colleagues to read through proposals

- Ask for copies of proposals from colleagues