

APA DIVISION 15 PRESENTS

▶ ONE TIP

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"SO YOU WANT TO BE GRANT-FUNDED SCHOLAR? ENTER WITH CAUTION & PREPARE TO BE PATIENT"

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Increasingly, early career science practitioners are expected to secure grant funding for their scholarship in order to achieve tenure and promotion. The funding landscape is quite competitive and can be difficult to navigate. Without specific training from a mentor, it can be difficult to understand the numerous funding agencies and their diverse mechanisms. In an effort to level the grant writing playing field, this issue of *One Tip* provides some basic introduction into finding funding opportunities and grant writing.

Although I have been consistently funded by federal agencies for the last 13 years, this was not always the case. I did not secure my first federal grant until 2006, after getting really close for the first 10 years of my professor career. So, patience is critical!

You might be thinking: How did you do all that school-based research with no funding? Well, I relied heavily

on foundation grants and internal seed grants at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign. I also collected my own data alongside undergraduate and graduate students, which I continue to do even with my large grants.

Sometimes I hear from early career professionals that they may not need funding for their scholarship. That may be true, but I always ask them, “But how would your research look different if you *did* have federal funding?” For me, I could not work at the scope that I am now able to with multi-million dollar grants. After securing funding, I was able to extend my school-based studies from short-term longitudinal designs (1-year) to longitudinal designs spanning important developmental periods (e.g., six years from early adolescence to late adolescence). Furthermore, I was able to fund randomized clinical trials with over 30 schools in several studies.

So, if you answered that funding might be helpful for your research program, then keep reading.

Here are general tips to consider as you enter the grant-funded world:

1. Learn about the funding mechanisms in the large federal agencies that might fund your work (Institute of Education Sciences, National Institutes of Health, National Institute of Justice, Centers for Disease Control, National Science Foundation). Each agency has webinars and power-point decks that explain what they fund, who they fund, their funding cycle, and project officers managing various areas/topics.
2. Start drafting your “specific aims” one pager and share with project officers at the funding agencies that have request for applications (RFA) or request for proposals (RFP) that align with your research. When preparing your specific

aims and your research ideas, ask yourself these questions: (1) Does your idea address an important problem?; (2) Will scientific knowledge be advanced, and—if so—how?; (3) Does it build upon or expand current knowledge?; (4) Is it feasible to implement and to investigate in your location and in your lab?...

3. Start this process early and allow six months to prepare your first grant application.
4. Get examples of successful grant proposals for the agencies that you are submitting to.
5. Collaborate with colleagues who have been successful in securing grants.
6. Align your research ideas with the priorities listed in the RFA/RFP.
7. If you are not “scored” (yes, that means the review panel did not talk about your application) do not get frustrated—it happens to many of us.
8. If you were scored but not in a fundable range, pay close attention to the reviewers’ critiques and call the project officer to see if he/she was in the room when the panel discussed your application.
9. Resubmit, resubmit....
10. Congratulations, you got funded and your life as a professor has just changed!! On one hand, you have support to do that large-scale study you have been dreaming of...but, on the other hand, you are now a grant manager! That will require another *One Tip*.



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