Final Tips for a Competitive Proposal
April 20, 2017

Introduction

Michael Lesiecki – I'm going to begin the recording, because this session is recorded. Thank you for joining us today for Final Tips for a Competitive Proposal. I'm your webinar host here at the Maricopa Community Colleges, my name is Mike Lesiecki. Welcome to today's webinar.

Webinar Details

Michael Lesiecki – For this webinar, you're going to be in listen only mode. Using your computer or phone for your audio system, but please use the question window, it's on the lower, sort of middle right of your screen. And yes, once again, the recording is, the webinar is being recorded.

Brought To You By

Michael Lesiecki – These webinars are brought to you by the Centers Collaborative for Technical Assistance with grateful support from the National Science Foundation.

The CCTA IS Led By

Michael Lesiecki – Let me tell you a little bit about the Centers collaborative. It's led by the National Center for Convergence Technology at Collin College in Texas. And you can see the four other centers, South Carolina, Florida, Bio-Link and San Francisco and the famous Networks Resource Center at the Maricopa Community Colleges here in Arizona.

CCTA Purpose

Michael Lesiecki – The purpose of this initiative is to respond to a request from the Department of Labor to collaborate more closely with National Science Foundation grantees to share best practices. And this material is relevant whether you have a Department of Labor grant, a National Science Foundation grant, any sort of workforce-oriented grant or a wannabe so dispense, so to speak, in terms of getting a grant to support your workforce programs. The initiative delivers webinars like this one with live recorded Q&A sessions one week from today and a series of documented best practices, which you'll find on the website, and we host convenings and we will mention that at the end of today's webinar.

Poll #1: Your Affiliation

Michael Lesiecki – But let me, now, ask you a question. So I'm going to open the first poll here, which asks you to describe your affiliation. So please tell us on your screen, choose one of those radio buttons, you're involved with a National Science Foundation grant; you're involved with a TAACCCT, Department of Labor grant; both of them or neither of them. Oh, thank you all very much, you're voting very quickly today, that's good. You probably know the answer to this one. I'm going to give you a count down from five and then, we'll take a look at the poll. Five, four, three, two one, there we go. Polls closed.
Let's take a look at the results of that poll. Well, that's pretty interesting. So, of those that are involved with the National Science Foundation grant, thirty-eight percent, about thirteen percent with the TAACCCT grant, several of us have both of those grants. And Celeste and Ann, a large fraction of our audience today, twenty-eight percent doesn't have either of those grants. So that's pretty interesting for us. One more poll, which I'm going to do it right now.

Presenters
Michael Lesiecki – Well, I tell you what, let's go ahead from that poll and talk just about today's, let me introduce today's presenters. Joining us today is Dr. Celeste Carter, the lead program officer at the National Science Foundation. Celeste, how long has your tenure been at NSF ATE? Is it seven years now?

Celeste Carter – Yeah, it's a little over seven years now. So, come October it will be eight.

Michael Lesiecki – How exciting to see the evolution of the program over that time

Celeste Carter – It definitely is.

Michael Lesiecki – Yes, thank you for joining us today. And, also, joining us, Ann Beheler. She's the principal investigator at the National Convergence Technology Center, CTC. Ann, welcome to the webinar.

Ann Beheler – Thank you! Just FYI, my slides are not advancing. I don't know if others are or not.

Celeste Carter – And I can't see them right now.

Ann Beheler – Uh oh. Okay, I think there's a problem there, because Mike's still showing the results of the polls.

Celeste Carter – Right.

Previous Webinars
Michael Lesiecki – So let me change that, I'm very sorry.

Ann Beheler – There you go! Good, good, good.

Michael Lesiecki – Thank you. So at least somebody corrected me so thank you very much.

Ann Beheler – Hey, that's the beauty of a live webinar.

Michael Lesiecki – So Ann, would you like to take it from here.

Ann Beheler – Sure, I'm happy to. And I'm delighted to have Dr. Carter helping us today, because she is the epitome of information on how to write an effective proposal. We're going to handle this by going through some slides and stopping very many times throughout to ask for her response and comments. We have way too many slides. I, typically, like to have one for every minute or two and we definitely have one per minute so that's going to put a lot of our questions on a week from today in the in the afternoon again at 3 o'clock. We'll have a Q&A session and we'll be talking about that more as we get a little further in the proposal, not proposal, in the presentation. We do have three previous webinars. There was one on grants and innovations, one on proposal resources, one on developing stakeholder partnerships, and all of those are out on the link that is shown there. They're recorded webinars with slides, other support documents and transcripts. So those are really good resources for you. I highly suggest you don't take this one standalone and rather you go ahead and listen to all of them. And Mike, I'm still getting a little bit of an echo. Are you?

Celeste Carter – I'm not, Ann. It sounds okay to me. Hopefully, it's not too bad.

Ann Beheler – Okay, all right. Well, maybe it's just me. Okay, all right, next slide.

This Webinar and Follow-up Q&A
Ann Beheler – Okay, I've already pretty well covered this, but what we're going to do in this webinar is talk about the review process. I don't we've done a whole lot of work on having you know about what's actually involved in that mysterious review process, which isn't all that mysterious at all. We're going to recap various elements and components of an effective proposal. We're, also, going to point out some fatal flaws, things that you absolutely do not want to do. We'll, also, talk about submission and what happens after that. It is a very complex situation to put together a competitive proposal, but really there is a more or less a cookbook that we use, which is the SGA and we'll talk about that in a minute. Next slide.

Resources
Ann Beheler – These are resources I put them right up front, because I really think that you ought to go look at these resources or download these resources as you need. This needs to be something that you work with for sure, especially if you've never done and NSF grant. Next slide.

The Review Process
Ann Beheler – All right, the review process. It is a peer review process. Each panel does review several proposals. When I've been on a review panel, sometimes it says as many as a dozen, sometimes it says as few as eight or nine. One thing you need to know is those panelist may or may not be from your discipline exactly, and they may or may not understand a lot about how community colleges function. They may come from industry; they may come from four-year institutions; they may be connected actually with your, your discipline, but, for example, in IT the portion of IT that I really work with primarily is infrastructure in communications. But, we don't necessarily work with a whole lot of programming, although, that's changing. So, it might be someone that is from IT and is focusing on programming that actually would review a grant. And before the panel meets, each reviewer gets an assignment of the various proposals that they're going to review, and they're asked to write up the review evaluating strengths and weaknesses of intellectual merit, actually asked to do that in advance, enter it in advance, before they actually get to the review. Next slide.

Panel Review
Ann Beheler – Okay, next slide.

The SGA
Ann Beheler – Oops, hold on, I think we're at that next slide. Sorry, back to the previous one.

Panel Review
Ann Beheler – Sorry about that. Okay, the other thing that the panelist do is they give a, assign a rating to the grant proposal ranging from poor to fair to good to very good and excellent. They assigned that in advance usually before the panel review, and of course, it can be changed during that review. There is usually one lead that handles the discussion, and there's one scribe that actually does the write-up of the summary of the review panels comments. The reviewers, again as I said, can update both, the write-ups and the ratings, during the panel review. The scribe also writes that summary of the discussion into or transfers it into the system. Often times we write it using Word [Microsoft Word], but then, we

transfer it into the system reflecting what the entire panel thought. I'm going to stop right here, Celeste would you like to comment on this?

Celeste Carter – Sure. One thing is really the importance of realizing that we're always looking for reviewers for different panels that are run for the different programs. And it's a great experience for everybody, especially if you've never done this before to come and be a reviewer once. It's probably a, I was used to say as a faculty member, it was the best professional development experience that I had ever had. And you learned very, very quickly in the space of really one panel meeting what you and others very quickly see in a siding rating to a proposal and saying, "Boy, these people really hit the ball out of the park. They did a wonderful job. It's concise; it's clear; we really understand what's going on." Versus one where you say, "You know, seemed like a good idea, but they didn't really describe it in enough detail for us to really provide them with even a lot of good feedback other than just say, please give us more detail. And so you figure that out very, very quickly and as Ann pointed out, we don't require that any panelist or the overall panel reach a consensus. So one of things that makes my job rather exciting is when someone on the panel thinks or more than one thinks that its excellence and someone else rates it as a fair or a poor. That gives me a lot of time that I have to spend reading and thinking about it carefully to justify why these people were so widely different in their ratings and also how do I move forward with that. So I think on this slide that's, that's about it, Ann.

Michael Lesiecki – Ann, don't forget to unmute.

Ann Beheler – Thank you, next slide.

The SGA

Ann Beheler – (laughter) Whoops! Okay, the SGA. The solicitation item for the proposal is called the SGA. I cannot say it enough, read and reread and reread again that SGA, because it's not light reading; it's not something that you can pick up with one pass through. However, it's not terribly many pages; it's definitely not as large as some of the solicitations for the Department of Labor grants, it's a little bit shorter than that but it's still very, very necessary. It does outline the specifics of what you need to do in your program development and you need to judge everything you propose against that SGA as will the reviewers. Now the SGA, right now, is in process for the next, I think its three years. Isn't it, Celeste? Uh oh, she's on mute

Celeste Carter – Okay, there we go. There we go, I'm unmuted. Yes, the solicit, the last solicitation ended last October. The current solicitation for the ATE program is just about to enter the clearance process and it has to be out at least three months prior to the due date, which will be in the first week in October. It should be out well in advance of that, I'm hoping that the clearance process that, you know, we work, I work for the Federal Government now and it's kind of a lengthy process, but hopefully, we've already gone through all of the pre publications steps. And there's, now it's sort of entering into the more formal steps. In addition, this also, this also brings, this slide brings up the point that, there's really two things you want to read that the PAPPG, which is proposal processing and award administration and all that kind of stuff, gives very, very specific instructions on crafting a proposal in the parts of a proposal. If the solicitation contradicts the PAPPG, or you can think of it just the opposite way, the solicitation always trumps the PAPPG. So that's one to remember. I do get phone calls and e-mails on that, people ask me what they should be following. So if the solicitation is your primary, is the primary one that you want to read, but there's also a lot of information in this other NSF document, back to you Ann.

Ann Beheler – Thank you. And in that PAPPG, that was one of the links that I showed you right at the front of this presentation. That one is quiet lengthy, and you're probably going to want to use the index for the PAPPG to go through and figure out the items that are going to specifically apply to the proposal. For example, formatting of the proposal, itself, the definition, the description portion, the summary portion. How long can it be; what font can it be; what margins do you have to use? Those things do matter. Next slide.

Not Addressing SGA Requirements and Prohibitions

Ann Beheler – Now, what if you don't address the SGA requirements and there's some prohibitions in there, it can result in a proposal that totally misses the mark, and it can be returned without review. I can't imagine anything sadder than working very, very hard to put this proposal together and then, realizing that you didn't follow the rules, and it is returned without review. That would be pretty sad. Also, you know…

Celeste Carter – And I agree.

Ann Beheler – Yeah.

Celeste Carter – I agree, it's a lot of work to craft a proposal.

Ann Beheler – Yeah, and it also can result in a proposal that violates restrictions such as no allowable match funding. And I'm not going to go into what that means, but you're not allowed to talk about match in the actual proposal and that for sure is going to get you in trouble. Anything else, Celeste?

Celeste Carter – No, just that, it again, it goes back to, take the time to think about what your need is. Look at what you would, what you would hope to get out of a project and then, make sure you go back and read that solicitation one more time to make sure that it fits. I know last year, there were a few people that completely missed, you need industry partners and that's been part of this program for a long time. So, you know, when they were crafting something, they really missed that point of needing industry partners and being responsive to industry that's a biggie. Another one that came up and does come up with some regularity is this is a program where you need leadership from two-year associate degree granting faculty. Okay, so that might be and in some cases, there are four-year institutions that are still offering two-year degrees; or like, I always think about Pennsylvania State University. They have obviously a four-year institution, but they also have some of their satellite campuses that are basically a community colleges. So, it would come in through a four-year, but it has to focus on that two-year. So again, that would be another one where, gee, please read carefully, I hate doing return without review.

Ann Beheler **–** Okay, next slide.

Planning for Proposal Creation

Ann Beheler – All right, proposal creation requires a *lot* of planning. The successful program, proposals are in my opinion, created on a schedule where you so to speak, create the elephant or eat the elephant one bite at a time. Don't try to just sit down and in one big spell, swoop write the whole thing. It usually works better when you have regular meetings with your stakeholders some of them may be people at your institution, but some of the people that need to be involved are going to be your business people as well. And maybe if you have a high school involved, you might want to have them involved. It is better to have a whole team that creates the proposal. And in my experience, it's wonderful to have a really good grant writer, but the grant writer can't write the grant unless that grant writer really understands what you're going after and what your needs are; what you're trying to accomplish. It's very important to have a team involved and very important to guide that grant writer. The plans for creating all the parts including the project summary, the fifteen-page description, the budget narrative, the budget and other documents, lots of different (inaudible) for a project, regardless of the size of the project and also for centers, but we're primarily focusing on projects. Next slide.

<u>Competitive Proposal Timing</u>
Ann Beheler – So the timing, it can't be prepared at the last minute and it often requires months of planning and writing. I will say, we just submitted our, last year, our renewal proposal for our center and we started six months in advance. I don't know that it's required that you start quite that early for a project grant, but it is definitely something you want to do. I would say a couple of months or three months ahead of time. In fact, now it's not too early to get started. Celeste, comments?

Celeste Carter – I agree and I know, you know, one of the projects that some of you may have heard of, and I, also, know that Ann included the link to the Mentor Connect project, which is a project that involves a lot of experienced ATE PI's providing one-on-one mentorship as you craft a proposal. And when they start that process, the, Elaine Craft from the South Carolina ATE Center is the principal investigator and I know that she usually starts off saying that preparing a proposal is a little bit like having a baby. Nine months is not too, it's not too soon to think about really getting started on it. So, I would just add that.

Ann Beheler - agreed, agreed. I've help in the Mentor Connect system for a couple of years and I think the ones that are most successful are the ones that really get started early. Okay next slide.

<u>Statement of Need</u>
Ann Beheler – As Celeste said, you need a really good idea and that's basically your statement of need. Why should you do what you want to do? I think one of the fatal flaws is when an institution comes to me and says, "I want to write a grant, but I don't know what for." Well, I just send them back at that point to say, "Well what are you trying to solve?" It really needs to be something that solves an open problem in your area. Very important to have commitment from local business and industry. This is, I think, the only program within the National Science Foundation that focuses specifically on technician education. It's not to say we can't have transfers from our program, we can, but the primary goal is to focus on technician education. And who hires those technicians, well, your business and industry. The statement whatever you're going to do needs to be new at least for your institution based on your research of what other NSF grants have done and are doing. And we will talk about that more in a little bit. We'll also talk about what it means or actually, we can do this right now, what does it mean to adopt and adapt? You don't, on a project level, have to come up with a totally, one hundred percent, brand new idea. If someone else has done it and you get results from them, work with them, understand what has been done and it's something that you need to do with your institution, perhaps a brand new program. You can take what was offered from the grant that's already been funded and work with them, and then, customize it to your own needs, but it has to be a need in your region. And, don't forget, that need or good idea drives your entire proposal preparation. Next slide. Because it's related.

<u>Business & Industry Engagement</u>
Ann Beheler – Business and Industry Engagement, I think Celeste has already told you, we have to have that in your proposal. That does not mean, "Hey, I'm going to go out and find them." It means, "I've already found them, and they say there's a need." It's very important to name some of those businesses and talk about specifically how they're committed to helping you be successful. Now, how do you get it?

I got an entire process of how to put together business and industry engagement and my e-mail address will be at the end. We also have documents on our website. I'm happy to help you with that, but I can't spend the entire presentation on that. But it's okay, even if you don't know anyone in your area that actually is in business in your area to help you. How do you document it? Is actually pretty straightforward, although, it is not via motherhood and apple pie letters, which is what I call them. When, in fact, you might just have a general letter that says, "Oh my gosh! We think that this college is doing something that's very important so we support and think you should fund it." No, contrary to that, it's better to have that letter, in fact, required to have that letter specify what that business is committing to do to help you get with the program. They need to have skin in the game otherwise it's not going to work properly, and the students will graduate from a program that is not in high demand. Very big flaw… (Inaudible) I would even say, I don't, you know I don't know this, Celeste may be able to comment about this, but it, I would say that I have not seen a grant that got funded without business involvement. Celeste comments?

Celeste Carter – That's absolutely true. And another thing to think about is to think about your business and industry engagement as being a really important part of describing the need of why you're doing something in technician education. And you want it to apply to you and your institution regionally. So, sometimes people will say, "Well, we want to start a program in nanotechnology, and we've looked at the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The Bureau says, their statistics say that there's a need for people in the, in this area of nanotechnology in the United States in the next five years to the tune of a hundred thousand people a year." And that's the end of your industry need. Panelist look at it and they say, "Well, that's great, but what are the number of the industries using nanotechnology in your area; what is your regional need; what's their regional need; why are you proposing this?" So it isn't, you know, as we all know a lot of our students at community and technical colleges are there for a reason and part of that reason involves that this is home and they may not want to move 2,000 miles away. Another one to think about is, they may finish an associate's degree and still not want to move 2,000 miles away and so reviewers look at this and they say, "What's the need that you are proposing that will be met with you providing this highly qualified workforce for your regional industry." So that's definitely a big one to keep in mind.

Ann Beheler – Yeah, and one way you can sometimes find the local need is working with your workforce board or with other labor market information that comes from your state. In most cases, if you google "labor market need" or "expect a job growth in a particular industry within a state," you can get something that comes up that at least gives you a clue of someone that you could work with, if it's not exactly the data that you need. Next slide

Identifying Existing Awards

Ann Beheler – And again, remember, it does not work for you to suggest doing something that is already being done. I know that one group said that they were going to put together a convergence technology degree. Well, it would have worked fine for them to that if they had contacted us as a national center in convergence technology, but they didn't. And I, I believe they actually went in later and got funded, but at, from the first shot, they didn't, because they didn't know that there was a lot of resources already there. This is a link you can use, you do have to put in search criteria. And you can, at this point, access the abstracts for the grants that have been awarded, and you will know who the PI is so that you can identify someone to contact to figure out points of collaboration that you might have with the existing awards. You know, think about it, it's taxpayer money. You don't want that taxpayer money to go to a bad idea or duplicating something that's already been done. You want it to have the maximum benefit and that usually includes using whatever has already been shown to work and in fact, learning from anything that was planned that didn't work. Celeste, comments?

Celeste Carter – So, I would just say, it's our taxpayer money, right? We all pay taxes. So, so and I usually tell review panels that. Is that, you want to be, one of the reasons for asking reviewers to really spend a lot of time, you want people to really read these carefully and say, "Is this something that's new and innovative in this area?" If it's something like a convergence technology program, did they get in touch with Ann's center, Ann or other potential awardees that they found in the award's abstract. We want to make sure that this is an effective use of our money so I think that's definitely a good one. And I see there's an audience question that says, "Could a *need* be, upgrading my lab equipment?" And I think – we will get to that – but I think I can tell you right now that stay tuned for the new solicitation. And I would give you a tip ahead time to think about when you say you're upgrading your lab equipment, who wants it updated? Are you behind the times as far as producing a highly educated and qualified person that your industry will hire; are you missing something that industry says you need? So think about some of those things as you think about upgrading your lab equipment.

Ann Beheler – Okay, thank you very much. Also, too, when you are identifying existing awards the way you can show that you have, in fact, contacted the people that already have something in your area, is get a letter of commitment from the PI for that award, or someone at that institution that specifies how they are going to help you and commit to help you to make what you're doing successful. Next slide.

Intellectual Merit

Ann Beheler – Intellectual merit and broader impact absolutely required to be clear and concise for every single grant proposal for NSF. Intellectual merit is a succinct statement of what the work, if funded will add to the intellectual body of knowledge. And the broader impact is, who else benefits from it? Will the work contribute to broadening participation? Broadening participation may mean having more women involved in a typically male area or perhaps having more ethnic minorities involved or disable people, etc. Or, just affecting more students in a given region, perhaps in a region that is economically challenged. And then, what other institutions would benefit from the work. At the time that we submitted our original regional grant, the IT industry was frankly in decline after the Dotcom bust and many of the community colleges across the nation had more IT faculty than they could continue to support. Well, our premise after talking to the businesses was, in fact, that the industry would come back and that we needed to figure out what the next new thing was. So, we really were able to show that there were hundreds of community colleges that could potentially benefit from the work. Next slide.

Concise, Clear, and Credible IM and BI

Ann Beheler – Okay, clear, concise and creditable, believable, intellectual merit and broader impact, elevator speech. If you don't know what an elevator speech is, google it. It's basically the speech in four or five sentences that says, "How, what, when, where and why?" for your proposal. And it's used to convey your intent so that you can get others to support and commit to being involved in what you're doing. The intellectual merit and the broader impact do belong in the project summary, which is a one-page summary and in the project description. And one thing that I find distressing is if the intellectual merit in the project summary does not agree with the project description intellectual merit. That's not too good. Or, same thing for the broader impact. So that's very, very important. And actually, a summary of the intellectual merit and broader impact is in that elevator speech. And there's a reference, it's the National Science Foundation reference that gives a little bit more information about this. Celeste?

Celeste Carter – I think you covered pretty much everything. One of the ways, I think, pretty much everybody would understand an elevator speech is, literally, if you are riding on an elevator with a venture capitalist and you really want him to invest in your new idea and you've only got three minutes to tell him before he's going to hop off at that floor that he's already pushed the button. What are you going to tell him? And it's not as easy as it sounds …

Ann Beheler – No.

Celeste Carter – … Because its, you got to get it done in three minutes.

Ann Beheler – Well, I'd even say less than that.

Celeste Carter – Yeah.

Ann Beheler – Yeah, because…

Celeste Carter – But that's one of the things that we, NSF for the last three years, this is the third year we're hosting the community college innovation challenge and if you haven't seen that, please put that in the search box for NSF and find out what that's about, because it's a great opportunity, both, for you and your students. But one of the first thing that they do with the student teams when they come is, they say, "We're going to work on your elevator speech. We're going to tell you what it's all about. You're going to use your own project and you're going to craft it. And then, you're going to have to pitch people and convince them that your proposed project that you want to go forward with and start a company basically is something they're going to invest in." So it's definitely an important thing to craft carefully and think about.

Ann Beheler – Yeah, and you're not going to be in the Sears Tower for the amount of time that you have to do an elevator speech. Literally, I think the best ones are more like mission statements that are more like four or five or six sentences and that's just about it. Next slide.

Logic Model

Ann Beheler – Logic Model, we have talked about logic models before (inaudible). To explain the logic model, it's basically a graphical depiction of what you're doing in your grant. It defines what the inputs are; who's going to be involved; what other things are going to help; what your activities are going to be; and what your outcomes will be. And also, does cover both, short and longer term impacts. And what's the difference between an impact and an outcome? An outcome is – this is what happened. An impact is, as one of the former program officers use to say, he would tell me, "Okay, I'm really excited about your outcomes except I'd get more excited if you tell me why it really matters. And even more importantly, why it really matters to students." There is a link there, that is shown on the logic model and that is to the Evalu-ate, evaluation center in Western Michigan webinars and that one is a very good research, but not research, very good resource for you to be able to create a logic model. It's also very important that that logic model be in the fifteen pages of your project description not in the supplemental documents. As we talk about supplemental documents, there are, there is a facility for having them, but the reviewers absolutely do not have to read all of them. And so, it's very dangerous to put too much in the supplemental documents and I would say for sure that the logic model does not belong there. Celeste comments?

Celeste Carter – So, I'd just like to comment that one of the things the logical model is used for is engrafting your evaluation and assessment plan. It really gives you a map of here's goal number one; here's who would be working on that goal. Your expected or anticipated outcomes are here and this is how you'd actually measure it. So at the measurement part is that assessment part. And again, just as Ann said, return without review can happen if you stick your assessment and evaluation plan in supplementary documents. So just, you know, keep in mind, it's a hard lesson to learn to have something like that happen. You really, as a reviewer, you are told in the pre-panel review, reviewer webinar that you are not required to read any of the supplementary documents. So the fifteen page project description is really, has to be everything that informs the reviewer about what you are planning on doing and how you will assess it. So a logic model really, actually helps you. It's a great tool.

Ann Beheler – Okay. Next slide.

Project Summary

Ann Beheler – As I mentioned, you have a one page project summary that has a very short overview, the intellectual merit and the broader impact. It is entered actually in the fast lane in three separate sections. So you do have to be a bit careful, because it could, something may fit on your page in one page, but then, once you enter it into these three sections it may or may not actually fit in one page so be careful. This has to make your case and this is a good time to bring up that the program officers are willing to review and comment on one or two pages summarizing your approach. And it actually, probably is a good idea to draft out a draft project summary to be able to use to discuss with the program officers. Let's look at the next slide and then, we will turn it over to Celeste for comment.

Project Description

Ann Beheler – The project description, it has many parts, all of them have to fit in 15 pages. This is the not, not the time to have somebody write in a very flowery and verbose manner, because it just, fluff words do not fit in this particular case. Has to include your logic model; results of prior support if it's needed, if you've had prior support; the motivating rationale, which includes the need; intellectual merit; broader impact; goals objectives; activities; responsibilities that also is timeline; management plan; evaluation plan; dissemination plan; sustainability plan, all of that. It also, probably, will turn out that you don't have the luxury of having really, really fancy looking titles and lots of space around them, because it's very difficult to tell a complete story in 15 pages. Similarly, though, you want to make it where it's readable, don't make it where it's so packed with prose that the person reviewing it just gets sick of looking at it that doesn't work very well either. Celeste comments?

Celeste Carter – I would just say one thing about the project summary, that's the one-page document that pretty much all of us as the program officers here at NSF uses as the starting point for drafting your abstract. So the abstract which will be available to anyone who looks up your reward really comes out of that project summary. So that's something to kind of keep in mind as far as the way you craft it and how it reads. Some program officers, if your proposal reviews well and they would like to make a recommendation for award, they'll actually say, "Could you, please write your own abstract." A lot of time, though, it really in as many other times a program officer will say, "I'm going to take your project summary and I'm going to use that to craft the abstract." So remember that and again, 15 pages really isn't a whole lot of space to get all this in. Think about being as concise as you can. I remember having an argument one time when someone had been declined and one of the things I could say to them well, was that they had repeated the demographics of their institution in about five different places; then, I basically said, I said, "You wasted all that space by continually repeating what you had already had in another section" and this particular person got very upset, because they said, "Well, that's what the grant writer told me I had to do." And I said, my response was, "Please, come at the next review panel and we'll work on that." So, I can say that she did and she was funded the next time she wrote a proposal. So definitely, concise to the point, clear as Ann said, not too flowery and it works.

Ann Beheler – Well, and the other thing too is I would suggest that the grant descriptions that I have read that are nine or ten pages, you almost can't get all the pieces in. I'm not aware of anyone that I've actually voted to fund or voted to rank well that did not use most of the 15 pages. So, anyway, next slide.

Celeste Carter – I agree.

Michael Lesiecki – Before we jump ahead, Ann, let me interrupt with a question from the audience. Is it new to have that logic model up at the beginning? You know, sometimes it used to be in the back, where should it go?

Ann Beheler – Celeste?

Celeste Carter – I would put it with the evaluation plan, because generally the logic model is informing your evaluation plan and showing a clear pathway. Like you, may be your first goal was you are revamping a course in additive manufacturing and your logic model will show that you're going to revamp it – what you expect as an outcome; what your student outcomes will be and how you would access all of that. Just is like, you can follow that across your logic model and that assessment part is really what your evaluation plan is really about. So I will not put it up there at the very front. I would put with your evaluation plan.

Mike Lesiecki – Celeste, I may be…

Ann Beheler – But…

Michael Lesiecki – I'm sorry, Ann. Would it be against policy to put it in a landscape format instead of the standard portrait format for that logic model?

Celeste Carter – Oh, you can definitely put it in the landscape.

Michael Lesiecki – Okay, thought so, good. Go ahead Ann.

Ann Beheler – Well, in, at least one time I put the logic model at the very first and referred to it saying that it guided all of the pieces as the whole thing came together. So, it kind of depends on how you want to handle it, I think though. As long as it's explained. I think the key thing is does the story makes sense. You know, can anybody understand it. Anyway, we're going to have to step it up a little bit or we're going to run totally out of time.

<u>What Are You Going To Do?</u>

Ann Beheler – So let's go on to the next one, goals and objectives. You must cover goals, objectives, activities and maybe even put the timeline and that could be done in terms of tables, but you, there needs to be some narrative that explains what's going on. And we actually had a webinar in February that talked about the goals and how they could be smart goals. And I'm not going to take time to talk about that either here. Clarity matters, it's very important to say who's responsible for accomplishing each activity objective goal. How is it going to be done? And again, it could be a table, probably should be if you have very many goals. And actually probably shouldn't have more than three, maybe four goals, maybe five, but not a whole list of 10 or 11 goals. Next slide.

Timeline

Ann Beheler – And then, the timeline, when are the activities going to be done assuming you get funded. But thing is, you don't know when you're going to get funded. You might get funded in the spring of the year after we submit the proposal or it might be the summer. It might even be as late as in September and if that ends up being the case that could throw off what you're going to actually do with respect to actual death dates. Could be by month one after funding or quarter one after funding. Does have to be credible and it does have to take into account when you think the program will be funded; the proposal will be funded, because I know I've worked with people who say, "Well, first thing we have to do is modify curriculum and we're going to actually start on that early." So if they get started in spring before the semester begins in fall that might work well, but it depends on the faculty being available over summer to get it all accomplished. So just, just be aware of that. Okay, Celeste, comments?

Celeste Carter – No, I think you pretty much covered everything. I would think about it, some people will do very long time lines where it basically takes up the whole page, because they're blacking out little boxes for each quarter that something will be done. Think about that in terms of the space you need. You can, I think, describe in a few sentences if you will be starting with curriculum modifications. May be the first thing you'll do is you've done a preliminary industry survey, but you're going to do a more exhaustive one and that will occur, you know, in the first year. It doesn't have to have quite the level of taking an entire page with little boxes blacked out, but see what your space looks like and how many things you are proposing to get done.

Ann Beheler – Yeah, and as I said, we have oftentimes put it as a column in the table that has the goals objectives, activities, who's responsible, how are you measuring it. We get kind of creative to get that in there to get it all there and that can be done as well. Okay, next slide.

Key Personnel Must be Qualified

Ann Beheler - It's important that key personnel be qualified. That background is established by a bio-sketch and that actually goes in the supplementary documents. See the PAPPG for the format. It is very specific about how it's formatted. It is not a CV, I think it's a max of 2 pages...

Celeste Carter – It's two pages.

Ann Beheler – Correct? I think? Right?

Celeste Carter – Two pages.

Ann Beheler – It does explain specifically what you have to put in it. It's not appropriate to put in a bunch of fluff there, it needs to be exactly like it supposed to be. It's also important to explain the roles in the body of the proposal. Any comments, Celeste?

Celeste Carter – I think that's it. One thing to mention here is that there are times when you may not have someone with the exact expertise that you need and you going to actually hire someone and that person may even over the course of the project be an adjunct. One of the things that strengthens a proposal like that is if you can get an administrator to say if this course, slash, program, slash, whatever it is, takes off and is approved and it's going to be offered, we will either continue to keep this person hired and/or we will look for someone with similar expertise, because sometimes you can't guarantee that you can keep that same person. But that gives reviewers an idea that that the funds are not going to just be used for a period of three years and then, everything is just going to fall apart, because the person with the needed expertise isn't going to be at the institution any longer. So there's workaround for things like that.

Ann Beheler – Okay, next slide.

Evaluation Plan Must Be Clear

Ann Beheler – And I'm going to cover about three of them and then, ask you to comment about three of them at the same time. The evaluation plan we've talked about that in detail prior to this. It probably should answer three or four key research questions and address how you're going to determine whether your work was successful or not; what data are you going to gather; who's going to do it; who's the evaluator. I like to put an evaluator and their qualifications into the bios sketches that go in. I know that some colleges have problems with procurement and designating that a particular evaluator is a sole source, that may have to be adjusted, but it does strengthen your proposal if you're showing that you have a qualified evaluator. Next slide.

Results of the Work Must Be Disseminated

Ann Beheler – It is also very important that the work be disseminated and details do matter – where you're going to disseminate it; who else is going to benefit. Talk about how you're going to use social media, if you're going to use it; what publications should you anticipate, more detail reviews is better than less detail and all in 15 pages. Next slide.

Sustainability

Ann Beheler – Then sustainability, what activities are goals do you expect to be sustained after your grant is completed and how are they going to be sustained. We've had whole slide, whole presentations on that. I know that ATE Central has recoded webinars on sustainability so I'm going to refer you to that for the details. Celeste?

Celeste Carter – Okay. So I would agree with that. The language on sustainability in the ATE solicitation basically says we don't expect that you can sustain everything and some things are very easy like, let's say you are either revising or developing a new course and/or program, you get it all done in the course of a three year award; it goes through your curriculum clearing committee; it's offered in your catalog and it's now a part of your institution. That's complete sustainability. One other example might be that and I know Ann can actually speak to this, because was a TAACCCT awardee who had…Ann, how many career coaches did you have under TAACCCT?

Ann Beheler – Four to six over time.

Celeste Carter – Okay, and how many were you able to sustain when the TAACCCT award finished?

Ann Beheler – Well, because we collected really good data, we initially went in asking to sustain two, but what happened was the data was strong enough that they wanted to sustain three. That's a very usual situation.

Celeste Carter – Right, yes…

Ann Beheler – But you have to have data.

Celeste Carter – That's it, that's it. So, you came up with a plan with the data and your institution said, "We will continue to do this, because we think the results are really important." So those are the kinds of things you want to think about as far as sustainability. Again, remember, it's our taxpayer money. The ideal that you get money for three or four years and then, everything falls apart, because you can't keep the person or you or the equipment is no longer usable or something like that happens. You want to think about that because we want to make good investments, right? None of us want to think that, that the funds that we pay to the Internal Revenue Service are going for things that are not going to help people in the long run, right?

Ann Beheler – Next slide.

Supplemental documents

Ann Beheler – Supplemental documents, the bio-sketches definitely go there; the commitment letters from business and industry go there; there may be a few other things that can go there, but do not under any circumstances use those supplemental pages to provide information that should have been in the 15-page project description. Other people have to do it in 15 pages and so do you. That's just basically the bottom line. Next slide.

Budget

Ann Beheler – Okay. I'm going to go ahead and start talking about the budge as soon as they can get the next slide to show. We'll work forward, there may be technical…oh, there we go. There is a budget per year of the grant and you cannot exceed the maximum dollar amount in total for the type of grant you propose. The project grants are anywhere from 200,000 to 900,000 with the existing SGA and it's important that you not exceed those, those numbers. The indirect rate has to match the college's indirect letter. You, if you don't know about that, we have resources that can explain that, but you do need to take your indirect. The budget justification is a narrative that explains those numbers. It's not enough to just put numbers in a spreadsheet, there needs to be an explanation of what is going to be done by each of the people and what's going to be done by each of the other expenses. For an example, we have training every summer, we help with a little bit of the travel so we have some participant support to help the people come to the training. We also have money in there to feed them a lunch, which is kind of nice. And the thing that's important is that budget has to credibly align with the entire project description and it supports the story. Next slide.

Other Attachments

Ann Beheler – Some of the other attachments – there's a data management plan; how are you going to preserve the data the grant creates; how are you going to provide access to the data in an aggregate form; and the information that you create under your grant needs to go out on ATECentral.org. And I think they talked about that in the last webinar. There's also a facilities plan, if you're going after perhaps no equipment and you're saying you're going to put in a brand new program, where is that equipment coming from? Very important to understand, maybe you already have it; maybe your college's budget has enough money to support what you need every year. Okay. Comments Celeste?

Celeste Carter – So one thing, it's ATECentral.net

Ann Beheler – Whoops.

Celeste Carter – It's not a .org, it's a .net. And under your facility… (Inaudible) that's alright, under your facility…

Ann Beheler – Alright.

Celeste Carter – …if you are a principal investigator or a co-principal investigator and your role on this project could be considered part of your regular duties, you don't have to request funding on the budget, itself. You can actually list under the facilities plan that your salary and participation on this project is just kind of the status quo of what your institution expects. And one thing that is changing in the new solicitation and I've already told the Mentor Connect people so I think I can tell you that a lot of times people were very, very upset when they were told that you couldn't, you had to go back to whatever your nine month contract was. You could ask for up to two months summer support and you could get some release time, but if you were teaching an overload and that was part of your regular, what you considered your regular load, what you were teaching so you could pay all the bills and everything else, it use to be that the language wasn't very clear on whether or not that was allowable. What the, what NSF has now done, is they now say, if your institution has a written policy about, you know, how many units you could be teaching of overload or what else you could do and it's an allowable thing for your institution and it applies to everybody in your institution. There's no problem coming in with a proposal where you are keeping your overload and maybe asking for a slight release for some of things that you're doing here or maybe you're dropping your overload teaching during the summer and asking for those funds to be coming off of your project budget. So, that is a big change and hopefully it's going to make it easier for people if you don't know if your institution has that policy, a written policy, you can go and ask about that. So, and you could ask in advance, part of the prep work you're doing. So, I did want to make that point.

Ann Beheler – Okay. Great. Next slide.

ATE Proposal Preparation Template

Ann Beheler – Okay, the ATE preparation template was something that Dr. Carter provided at the very first webinar and it has a place of boxes that you can fill in. I'm not going to say any more about that, but there's the link. Next slide.

Review

Ann Beheler – This is very important, do not plan to finish your grant two days before its due or the day it's due. That is not the way to ensure you have a competitive proposal. We try to complete our proposals at least a month ahead of time so that we can have people that are not so integrally involved with the preparation team, actually evaluated and ask their questions and we try to incorporate their suggestions as well. We, also, circle back around to the SGA requirements and compare making sure we are in alignment with that and then if possible, we have it even reviewed again. So we try to get it done a month ahead of time, incorporate the changes and then submit. And …

Celeste Carter – So…

Ann Beheler – Go ahead.

Celeste Carter – I was going to add one thing. Be sure that once you've uploaded something into Fastlane, hopefully you're using Fastlane – there are some problems using grants.gov –

download it again and print it out. I know I had one proposal that came in this last year and it was returned without review because it did not have a project description. Well, you could say, how could you miss the 15 pages? Well, somebody, when they were uploading documents, uploaded the project summary twice. So all they had was a one-page project summary in place of their 15 pages. And they never went back and looked at what was there and downloaded it to make sure everything looked good. So that's just a, you know, it can happen, right? If you're pushing the envelope and it's 10 minutes 'til five and you need to get everything, you haven't done it ahead of time, those kinds of mistakes happen.

Ann Beheler – Okay. Next slide.

http://fastlane.nsf.gov

Ann Beheler – Yes, you use fastlane.nsf.gov and the proposal is entered in pieces. And it's a good idea to begin entering sections early to ensure that you have that access setup and that you're able to enter and that you're able to download it. You can download and print it in. We always do. Also too, once you get it put in, your authorized organizational representative has to review what was entered and formally (inaudible) that you have their attention, that their ready to do it, because that may be someone who's very, very busy or worse case, maybe they're on vacation when you need them to submit. So, it's very important. And that person cannot be someone who's performing work on the grant, that's a fatal flaw. Next slide.

What To Expect, Submission and After

Ann Beheler – What to expect after submission or during submission, again, the date will be early October. All proposals have to be in by 5 p.m., your local time on the due date. There are no exceptions and then, I probably should have put it in caps to be patient. The review panels are typically in early December and then the program officers work with the reviews on those grants and work with the ones that are reviewed well to get them funded, but it takes a lot to get that review done. It takes a lot to get those grants ready to be funded and that is not the final step that has to happen. Even after the program officer recommends something for funding it goes to the Division of Grants and Award, Agreements, sorry, I always say awards. And they have extra work to do. We have two more slides on new performers and what to expect.

New Performers *

Ann Beheler – I think we're out of time so I'm going to suggest that you contact Dr. Carter or me with questions over that if you wish, but Celeste, final comments?

Questions

Ann Beheler – Final comments Celeste? … uh-oh

Michael Lesiecki – I still show her connected, Ann.

Ann Beheler – I do too, but I don't see. I wonder if she has lost her access. Well, let's just say we're going to have a question and answer session …

Michael Lesiecki – Yes.

Ann Beheler – … a week from today. We have a lot of information that we have covered today. I knew it was going to be a challenge, but the reality is, I believe that we'll have plenty of time in the Q&A session to go over whatever you might like.

Join Us
Ann Beheler - Mike, you want to finish it up real quickly.

Michael Lesiecki – Yes, I would and thank you Ann. You know, as you just mentioned that Q&A session, I think of as another hour with Dr. Carter and Ann Beheler will be April 27th at three p.m. eastern. And you can see the link there. To register, just go to ATECenters.org/CCTA or follow the links to your heart's content. You can submit questions in advance for this event by e-mailing Christina Titus, ctitus@collin.edu . There'll be plenty of chance, also, to open the microphones next week, next Thursday. And we can address these important aspects.

Join Us – All Webinars 3 pm Eastern
Michael Lesiecki – Ann, you guys covered a ton of ground today. It was very exciting getting the perspective on this. So thank you very much for that presentation. And Dr. Carter, thank you as well. I'll point out that there's an upcoming webinar on May 18th, Creating Dashboards for Grants Development. So as you develop and manage grants, how do you track your progress; how do you measure those things? Several famous presenters for that one. So you can see over… [laughter] Thank you for laughing there, Ann. You can see all of our upcoming webinars at atecenters.org/ccta.

Join us in Salt Lake City, UT!
Michael Lesiecki – And the last thing, please join us if you like in Salt Lake City in July. Lovely time of year to go there at the HI-TEC conference, there will be a special convening of the CCTA group and you can see information about this on the highimpact-tec.org website. That concludes our formal presentation today. Thank you again to our presenters. As you exit today, a new browser window will open and a few brief questions come up asking you to give us some feedback on this webinar series, how we can improve it. Thank you again and that concludes our presentation today. Than you to both, to you and Dr. Carter.

Ann Beheler – Thank you very much.

Michael Lesiecki – Good bye everyone.

Ann Beheler – Bye.