

## Tip Sheet on Characteristics on NIFA Award-winning Grants

### Keys to Success

- Attend Grantsmanship Workshops
- Volunteer for peer review panels to get an inside look at how proposals are evaluated.
- Read the RFA carefully to ensure a good fit of your project to the our program; check eligibility and matching requirements carefully.
- Call the NPL responsible for the program of interest. Discuss your ideas for a proposal to get feedback.
- Allow plenty of time for proposal preparation and submission through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

### Preparing Your Project Description

- Clearly state expected outcomes and impacts.
- Understand the evaluation criteria cited in the RFA.
- Describe how you plan to measure progress toward meeting your objectives.
- Include current resumes of key personnel, and explain the roles of each participant.
- Include documentation of collaborations through letters attached to the proposal.

### Preparing Your Project Budget

- Refer to the RFA for allowable expenses. Know whether indirect costs or equipment or travel are allowed and whether the RFA requires matching funds.
- Explain in detail in the budget narrative each budget entry. For equipment, explain how it is necessary for the successful completion of the project. Explain, if appropriate, how equipment would be used cooperatively in specific tasks and projects.

### Improving Your Proposal

- Obtain a successful proposal from a successful colleague.
- Review abstracts of recently funded projects in the programs of interest.
- Obtain critiques from colleagues before you submit.

### Common Reasons for Lower Ratings

- Little or no relevance to NIFA mission and/or program priorities
- Insufficient data or evidence from literature to support the project proposed
- Exceeds page limit, poorly written, unclear objectives or hypotheses
- Low technical/skill merit, basic flaws in logic, demonstrates lack of scientific or pedagogical understanding
- Unclear why the proposed project is innovative or needed
- Inappropriate approaches or methods too vague; core competencies/expertise-development lacking
- Poor progress or few results from previous funding
- Human capital development proposal shows no management for successful outcomes

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- If preparing an integrated proposal (one that combines research, education and/or extension), please refer to the NIFA website page on Integrated Programs.

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