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INTRODUCTION

This Workbook has been designed to assist you in the general preparation of an application that can be submitted to almost any funding agency. The basic approach to be utilized in this Workbook is predicated upon the concept that "A Grant is a Grant." Thus, in the final analysis, it really does not matter to which funding agency you are applying. Every granting agency wants to support the very best ideas (provided that they are compatible with the overall mission of that funding agency) and that the basic elements that go into the evaluation of that idea will be the same. Is the proposed work significant? Are the applicants well qualified, and is there evidence that they will be able to actually do what is being proposed? Is the plan for the proposed work (approach) logical and well laid out, and have the applicants provided tangible evidence that they are capable of actually doing the work that has been proposed? Is the environment appropriate, and are the necessary resources available for completion of the project? Have the applicants provided information on exactly how the success of the project will be evaluated? Is the time allocated to do the work adequate and appropriate? Is the budget reasonable, well justified, and within the limits of what the funding agency can support? Finally, is the idea relatively novel, unique, innovative, or in some way easily distinguished from all other ideas that the funding agency will be asked to support? Fundamental grantsmanship requires close attention to ensuring that each of these important criteria is adequately and appropriately addressed somewhere in the application.

It is within the framework of these concepts that this Workbook has been designed. The Workbook itself is specifically separated into four equally important sections. The first section (CHAPTERS 1-6) describes the essential elements of what is required to prepare yourself to write the very best grant application of which you are capable. This is the "pre-writing" phase. The second section (CHAPTERS 7-10) describes the overall approach to the preparation of the all-important Overview/Executive Summary part of your grant application. The third section (CHAPTERS 11-15) discusses the various elements that normally serve as essential components of grant applications to many funding agencies. These topics include the development of the plan of work, the development of the budget, the documentation of the applicant credentials, and the description of the environment in which the proposed work will be performed. The fourth section (CHAPTERS 16-18) summarizes the remaining parts that should be written once you have completed an initial draft of the body of your application. These include the Abstract, the face page(s), a Table of Contents; and, of course, the title. We also underscore the importance of receiving critical feedback from your colleagues and ensuring that everything is in place when you submit your proposal to the funding agency. Attention to these sections will help ensure that your application will be maximally competitive before you ultimately submit it to a funding agency for consideration for possible support. Finally, we discuss the actual submission process.

Given that there are more than two dozen federal funding agencies, multiple organizations, and literally tens of thousands of foundations that provide grant support, it should be readily apparent that not all funding agencies would request exactly the same information in exactly the same format. Therefore, it will be necessary for most readers of this Workbook to extrapolate from the information presented to make the closest match with what is being requested in a given grant application format. Nevertheless, the key fundamental principles to be discussed in this Workbook remain relevant and independent of a given funding agency.
CHAPTER 9

EXAMPLES OF OVERVIEW/EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
SECTIONS OF PROPOSALS

In this chapter we will provide several prototype examples of well-written Overview/Executive Summaries of previously written grant proposals. The first example is a statement-of-need — driven proposal that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education and approved with high priority for support. We are grateful to the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature at Iowa State University (ISU) for allowing us to reproduce this material in this Workbook. The second example is a composite hypothesis-driven proposal synthesized from several successful grant proposals submitted to the National Institutes of Health. In spite of the obvious differences in focus of these two proposals, we trust that you will appreciate the strong similarities in structural organization of the information presented.

Example #1
Overview and Objectives — Foreign Language Learning

In today's increasingly global economy, professionals in business, engineering, and agriculture must be able to effectively deal with colleagues, competitors, and customers from cultures other than their own. Successful cooperative research, development, and marketing in these and related enterprises will increasingly depend upon all collaborators being familiar with the cultural and linguistic expectations and perspectives that each brings to the table. Although English has, de facto, become the primary language for international communication and commerce, both global corporations and international organizations, such as the EU, have increasingly recognized the critical importance of multiple languages and cultures in defining regional markets and interests. One language or one cultural perspective no longer provides even the minimal standard for students aspiring to leadership roles in the global community. Therefore, there is a critical need to develop interdisciplinary academic programs that will interface between departments that focus on multilingual cultural literacy and the professional programs that provide primarily the core competencies for success in specific professional disciplines. In addition, because most professional programs entail extraordinarily heavy academic schedules, such interdisciplinary programs will need to be designed to make studying other languages and cultures both attractive and feasible.

Our long-term goal is to create lasting collaborative curricular programs between the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature and ISU’s professional colleges to better prepare our students to function effectively in a global environment. Our objective in this proposal is to strengthen the new Languages and Cultures for Professions — Engineering secondary major and to establish similar programs in collaboration with the Colleges of Business and Agriculture. A critical need for such programs at ISU is evidenced by the fact that multinational corporations with
close ties to ISU increasingly express interest in recruiting students with the requisite international culture and language experiences. We have also witnessed significant increases in interest among students in pursuing secondary majors in foreign languages; however, the demands of most professional programs have made this difficult. Introducing a major specifically designed for professional-degree programs will allow us to make this a reality for a much larger group of students. We have strong institutional support for this project, grounded in ISU’s strategic plan to “encourage globalization initiatives for a better understanding of the multi-cultural and international world in which our future graduates will live and work.” A faculty-directed departmental task force first initiated the development of the Languages and Cultures for Professionals programs in the fall of 2002. Dr. M. Rectanus, Director of the task force, has already developed programs in area studies and professional communications courses within German. Each language program has representation on the task force and the full and active support of the Department’s Chair. We propose three primary objectives for this project:

Objective #1: Implement a secondary major option in Languages and Cultures for Professional Programs within the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature.

We have created a major for students in Engineering beginning in academic year 2003-2004. We will develop parallel programs with the Colleges of Agriculture and Business and will emphasize developmental roles of cultural literacy and linguistic skills for students in these professional programs.

Objective #2: In order to enhance the secondary majors developed as part of Objective #1, we will create stronger bridges between courses in Foreign Languages and Literature that already have a professional focus and those courses that have an area studies focus. This will include revisions to existing area studies courses (e.g., Germany Today, Contemporary France) as well as the introduction of new area studies courses in Chinese, Russian, and Spanish.

Objective #3: Refine and expand the study-abroad and internship programs for students enrolled in the Languages and Cultures for Professionals programs. We will continue to develop new relationships and expand existing relationships with Corporate partners to significantly increase opportunities for meaningful culturally relevant internships for students in the professional colleges.

The Languages and Cultures for Professionals major will be unique within the Iowa Regents University system. Currently, no other universities in Iowa offer a specially designated major option in foreign languages for professionals. Instead of conceptualizing courses in business and professional communications merely as add-ons to an existing curriculum, the proposed project will integrate and diffuse elements of professional communications with those of global literacy. The successful completion of this project is expected to result in four substantive project outcomes. First, we anticipate a significant increase in the number of students in professional programs who will declare a secondary major in foreign languages by choosing the new Languages and Cultures for Professionals option. Second, the students enrolled in this new major will be expected to achieve a higher level of linguistic proficiency and global literacy than most of their peers in professional programs. Indeed, this new major will expand the boundaries of their primary major by requiring them to develop a framework for their professional practice as it relates to diverse sociocultural contexts. Third, students will develop the ability to work creatively and collaboratively with students in other professional and liberal arts majors through both their academic course work and internships. Finally, the programs will enable us to strengthen and expand our ties with corporate partners who need students with training and expertise in language and culture and are willing (and able) to support our efforts by assisting with internship opportunities, resources, and expertise. The Languages and Cultures for Professionals programs will provide a much-needed and unique platform and forum for global education at ISU that is embedded within the professional major while at the same time create new opportunities for collaborations among students, faculty, and corporate leaders.

Example #2
Overview and Objectives — Pharmacology of Wound Healing

Integrity of the skin as a protective barrier is one of the more important innate host defense mechanisms, and reestablishment of that barrier function after injury through wound healing is essential to prevent infection. In a number of diseases (e.g., diabetes, scleroderma, severe acne), persistent dermal lesions are significant causes of morbidity in the U.S. and throughout the world. In diabetes, these dermal ulcers are exceptionally problematic to treat and can ultimately require surgical intervention. Given the extensive increases in the incidence of diabetes during the past several decades, it can be anticipated that this problem will continue to present emerging challenges. The underlying mechanisms responsible for the healing process involve the initiation of an early post-injury inflammatory response leading to the production of fibroblast growth factor that, in turn, initiates extensive fibroblast proliferation at the site of injury and subsequent reestablishment of the protective dermal barrier. Although relatively few strategies to enhance wound healing have been identified, recent studies have suggested that treatment of wounds with either recombinant human fibroblast growth factor or human IGF-1 have both shown promise in preliminary clinical trials; unfortunately, both treatment strategies are expensive and not practical for long-term usage. Therefore, there is a critical need to identify therapeutic agents from more abundant natural sources that would be effective in enhancing wound healing and at the same time be relatively inexpensive and suitable for long-term topical usage.

Our long-term research goal is to discover and develop pharmaceuticals from natural products that can be used in the treatment of human disease. Our objective in this proposal is to identify the active component present in extracts of the common garden plant Gardenia jasminoides that enhances wound healing in an experimental animal model and to identify the mechanism of its action. This research is predicated upon our strong preliminary data showing that lipid extracts from G. jasminoides have several potentially important biological properties, including the ability to activate fibroblasts, and that G. jasminoides may be an effective therapeutic agent to treat wounds in rabbits. Our central hypothesis is that the active component present in G. jasminoides is a lipid beta-carotenoid and that it directly activates fibroblasts to proliferate at the site of wounds. Our rationale for these studies is that the identification of medicinal compounds that can promote wound healing in experimental animals would establish a strong scientific framework for eventual clinical trials in humans. We are especially well prepared to undertake this project because, in addition to our strong preliminary data, the P.I. (D.J.Smith) has earlier identified and characterized a potent anti-tumor agent active from the crocuses plant (crocetin) that is highly active in the treatment of prostate cancer (Smith, D.J. et al, Cancer Research, 2004, in press). We propose the following specific aims:

Specific Aim #1: Identify the active component(s) in G. jasminoides responsible for enhanced wound healing in vivo. Our working hypothesis, based upon strong preliminary data to be presented in the proposal, is that the active component is a lipid beta-carotenoid.

Specific Aim #2: Determine the mechanism of action of the active component present in G. jasminoides that enhances wound healing. Our working hypothesis, also based
upon preliminary data, is that the active component directly stimulates fibroblast proliferation through the FGF receptor.

These studies are innovative in that the identification of a biologically active compound from natural sources that is present in relatively large amounts would provide a ready reservoir of a medicinal compound that could be used to treat wounds. At the completion of these studies, it is our expectation that we will know what that active compound is that is present in G. jasminoides as well as the mechanism by which it promotes healing of wounds. It is likely that this compound will turn out to be a lipid beta-carotenoid; however, even if it is not, we expect to be able to identify it. We also expect that this compound will activate fibroblasts, either directly or indirectly, through the FGF receptor. The successful completion of the studies is expected to have a potentially important impact in several fields of medicine, from diabetes to dermatology and immunology.

DEVELOPMENTAL STEPS FOR CHAPTER 9

1. Compare your Overview/Executive Summary as written in response to the format of Chapter 8 and compare it for structural similarities with the two examples presented above. Modify your Overview/Executive Summary accordingly.

CHAPTER 10

THE SIGNIFICANCE PARAGRAPH OF YOUR APPLICATION

The Significance paragraph is brief (no more than one-third to one-half page) but nevertheless a very important part of your grant application. As we discussed in CHAPTER 4, it may arguably be the most important section in your entire application because the review criterion of significance is so important. It should have a boldface, italic title, Significance of the studies outlined in this proposal, so that the reviewers will immediately know where to find information about the work's significance. In addition, strategically position this important paragraph immediately after the Overview/Executive Summary section of your grant application. This is because the final, fourth paragraph of your Overview/Executive Summary concludes with a discussion of what the impact of the successful completion of your project would be on the mission of the funding agency. It would logically follow that an expansion of those ideas would comprise the overall significance of your project.

What makes any project significant? It depends. Significance depends upon what exactly the mission is of the funding agency that provides the resources to do the project. In other words, whatever benefits derived from the successful completion of the project will accrue to the funding agency (and through its mission, to society in general) by applying the results or accomplishments of the completed project. You can be reasonably certain that almost any reviewer will include information about significance in his or her critique. Because no funding agency has infinite resources available to it, only projects that are of high significance — from the perspective of the funding agency — can even be considered for support. It is essential that this sometimes difficult-to-write paragraph be well written. The difficulty is that you must avoid obvious redundancy with the preceding Overview/Executive Summary section. You can do so by ensuring that the content of the significance paragraph is appropriately linked to but not redundant with specific components of the Overview/Executive Summary section.

To briefly summarize what was included under Significance in your Overview/Executive Summary section, remember that the importance of the problem, issue, or need to be addressed in the application has been initially spelled out in the first paragraph. This is the driving force for the whole proposal. The rationale — information that tells the reviewers what would be possible after the completion of the project that is not possible now — has been addressed in the second paragraph. The statement (or statements) of impact — information that is included at the end of the fourth or final paragraph — provides the reviewers with your perspectives on the general benefits that will accrue to the funding agency (and ultimately to society) by the successful completion of your project. The separate paragraph on Significance (this section) provides the reviewers with specific detailed information, complete with appropriate documentation from the relevant literature, as to why your project is important. It also should again focus specifically on the funding agency's mission.

Remember that the purpose of the Significance paragraph is to amplify fully the statements of importance and impact that you included in the Overview/Executive Summary
section (without duplicating this information) and to substantiate these reasons with appropriate citations. It is strategically important, therefore, that this paragraph appear on the second page of the grant application immediately after the final paragraph of the Overview/Executive Summary section. The only exception would be when the structured format of the grant application provided by the funding agency specifically requires that you do otherwise. Using this approach will help ensure that all reviewers will have the opportunity to read it immediately after the Overview/Executive Summary, thereby helping them once again understand the importance of your project. If the reviewers are not convinced early on that your project is really important, they will not bother to spend a lot of time reading or reviewing the remainder of the proposal in any great detail.

Unlike the Overview/Executive Summary section, it is essential that you cite references from the primary literature in your field here. You should, as a general rule, avoid citing reviews because this strategy provides the reviewers with little concerning your overall command of the literature in your particular field or discipline. There are two exceptions to this rule. First, if you have used the phrase in your introduction that a particular review might be one of your reviewers, this would be a good place to recognize that reviewer’s seminal contribution to the field. A similar recommendation applies to citations under Need/Assessment section; see CHAP. V. Second, there were a generally recognized authoritative source that has provided specific information or statistics on the subject (e.g., Office of the Attorney General, Presidential Commission on Educational Reform), this would be a good place to cite that information as well.

It is essential that you use appropriate citations to back up the unsupported assertions that you made in your preceding Overview/Executive Summary section. In fact, there is nothing that is stated in the Overview/Executive Summary that should not be amplified and expanded upon in at least one other section of the application. We recommend that you cite a minimum of first author/year (e.g., Zaharias et al., 2000). At least some of your reviewers will be sufficiently close to the subject of your proposal and will be able to recognize citations presented as first author/year without having to refer to the Literature Cited section at the end of the proposal application. No matter how intimately familiar a reviewer is with your subject area, he or she will not be able to recognize references that are cited by number (e.g., 24, 36, and 92) unless he or she goes directly to the Literature Cited section. Asking reviewers to flip back and forth in the application, review friendly, avoid requiring them to flip back and forth in the application, new and familiar to the field in which you will be seeking support and most of your publications would therefore cite you as the first author, this is also a clever way to get across to reviewers the important fact that you are the one who has actually done the work that is being cited.

In terms of actually preparing this paragraph, write the Significance paragraph in three distinct but nevertheless integrated parts. The first of these should detail and explain upon the fact that a gap in the knowledge base exists or that there is a critical need in the field or in the community and that its existence is an important problem that you propose to address. This is where you succinctly inform the reviewers how you came to the conclusion that there is a critical need (i.e., the needs assessment). In the approximate middle of this paragraph, you should introduce a simple, direct statement of why the proposed project is significant (that should logically follow from the needs assessment statements). This statement is arguably the most important one that you will write in the application because, again, significance is such an important review criterion. This sentence should be entirely highlighted in italics. The third and final section of this single paragraph should be used to validate your assertion of significance. Because benefits that accrue to applying the new knowledge or the solution to a key problem constitute significance, this third part should consist of a list of benefits that would accrue to the funding agency. You may not be (and usually you would not be likely to be) the person who directly provides those benefits. However, if the successful completion of your project will ultimately allow others to produce them, it is legitimate to claim them as benefits that could credibly be expected to result from your work. Finally, if you can call attention to any fringe benefits that might accrue after completion of the project, do so. By fringe benefits, we mean accomplishments that can be extrapolated beneficially to other venues and fields. For example, results that cut across species lines might be of importance to both education and behavior addiction. If you follow this three-part format, we are confident that you will write a strong, compelling Significance paragraph. Use the examples provided below to trigger your own ideas. Once you have a general feel for what you want to write, get it down on paper. The major goal here is to produce a first draft, that is, something that can be revised and embellished later.

In developing the first part of this paragraph, use these sentences to expand and emphasize how important the problem, issue, or need is that you have chosen to address. You have done so earlier in the Overview/Executive Summary section with a sentence or two in your opening paragraph. Without being redundant, you now want to develop fully the reviewers’ understanding of why you think this problem is noteworthy to take action on. To do so, you might consider the following opening sentence from your Overview/Executive Summary (using new phrasing — reviewers hate to re-read verbatim exactly the same information twice; they think that you are wasting their time with redundancy) and then follow with details that you could not include in your Overview/Executive Summary section. For example: "Social issue X (or education area Y or event, Z, whatever) has been universally established as among the most important that U.S. educators (refs). For example, in the year 2000, more than _______ were recognized (ref): Such widespread attention underscores the growing interest in, and significance of, the recently recognized acquisition of minimal social-emotional skills necessary for _______. Other points that are supportive of this fact are _______. This information collectively establishes the _______ needs assessment.

Once you have established this assessment that substantiates the critical need, follow with a single sentence that specifically emphasizes the significance of your proposed project. This single sentence is the segue that will tie the problem or need that you have identified to the solutions that you will provide by the successful completion of the activities you plan to carry out during the tenure of this proposed project (i.e., to the statement of why your project is significant). For example, your sentence might be something like "In spite of the now well-documented magnitude of this problem, there is still a critical need to determine exactly how _______. It is really important to document exactly how but that need will have already been determined. This framework then establishes the appropriate platform from your sentence beginning "This project is therefore significant because it will _______." Note that this sentence needs to be written in italics.

This statement must be followed by information that is both strong and credible (i.e., not just a thoughtless cliché or empty generality that fails to highlight specifically what your contribution will be) and that is not meant to be a restatement of what has been said, that is, logically follow from the needs assessment statements). This sentence is arguably the most important one that you will write in the application because, again, significance is such an important review criterion. This sentence should be entirely highlighted in italics. The third and final section of this single paragraph should be used to validate your assertion of significance. Because benefits that accrue to applying the new knowledge or the solution to a key problem constitute significance, this third part should consist of a list of benefits that would accrue to the funding agency. You may not be (and usually you would not be likely to be) the person who...
environments to manage the social-emotional transition to the formal environment of the preschool classroom," you might continue with details like "This, in turn, is expected to reduce or eliminate the educational disparities that these children usually experience in their later school years that cause them to become early school dropouts. This latter outcome is expected to produce important savings in the cost of education for these children in terms of costs for special help, summer school, repeating grades; the total annual savings of which are estimated to be $$$$$. Therefore, the positive impact on the field of education is anticipated to be significant."

DEVELOPMENTAL STEPS FOR CHAPTER 10

1. Delineate in bullet form all the key reasons why there is a critical need for your project, including appropriate authoritative citations from the literature. Synthesize these bullets into the first section of the Significance paragraph.

2. Write your single sentence (in italics) indicating specifically why your project will be significant to the mission of the funding agency.

3. Summarize in bullet form the potential benefits that would accrue to the funding agency after the successful completion of your project. Synthesize these bullets into the final section of the Significance paragraph.

4. Refine and polish this paragraph into a document that is approximately one-third a page with Arial 11 font and margins of one-quarter to one inch.

OVERVIEW PART THREE

WRITING THE BODY OF YOUR APPLICATION

Once you have finished writing the Overview/Executive Summary (CHAPTERS 7–9) and the Significance (CHAPTER 10) sections of your application, then, and only then, will you be ready to tackle the remainder of the application. Therefore, to be certain that we are all on the same page with respect to what should be in place when you get to this part of your grant application, it would be relevant to review exactly what should be in place. First, you should have a carefully crafted and critically reviewed (by your peers) Overview/Executive Summary of your grant application, as well as your Significance paragraph. Second, you should have made a final decision on exactly what funding agency you are planning to apply to and have had at least one discussion with a program officer in the funding agency where you are planning to submit your completed proposal (CHAPTER 3). If possible, it would be advantageous for you to have had the final polished draft of your Overview/Executive Summary reviewed for programmatic relevance by the program officer of the funding agency to which you are planning to submit your proposal. The funding agency may or may not be willing to do this, but it never hurts to inquire.

Third, you should have copies of all the forms and instructions (which you have read at least once and preferably several times) for the funding agency (CHAPTER 5). Fourth, you should have copies of all the publications that are relevant to the grant you are planning to write (note that this includes copies of publications and not abstracts of publications). Finally, and most importantly, you will need to have time scheduled on your day planner for approximately the next three months in order to complete your grant application. As we have earlier stressed (CHAPTER 6), time is, without a doubt, the most important element in successful application writing because this is always the rate-limiting factor to a successful proposal. If all these elements are place, you are indeed ready to begin writing the body of your grant application.

The approach that we are going to take to achieve this objective will be to divide this task into a series of activities that will encompass an approximate three-month time frame. In our opinion, the three-month agenda constitutes a reasonable but not excessive commitment of time that the average grant applicant should spend to write the best application of which he or she is capable while at the same time attending to other professional responsibilities that cannot be deferred or delegated. If it takes you a little longer than 13 weeks, that is not a problem — as long as you have sufficient time available before your deadline. If you have a grant application deadline that does not allow the luxury of a three-month time frame, you will need to compress the schedule presented below proportionately in order to meet your deadline. Thus, you should use this recommended schedule only as a very rough guide and not as something to which you must adhere. There is enough anxiety in this process, and we do not want to compound that problem for you.

The following chapters will therefore each represent individual weeks in the approximate 12- to 15-week program that will result in you completing all the steps that are absolutely essential for the completion of your application. This schedule will allow you to write the best application of which you are capable for submission to the funding agency. The following schedule will briefly