

## Questions to Ask Potential Funding Agencies

Grant seekers who discuss their projects with program officers gain insights not necessarily available from reading the RFP. Here are some suggestions for opening the conversation.

- Is funding available for new applications? (This is especially important at the federal level, as some agencies may be obligated to spend a significant percentage of their budget to support continuing projects.)
- How many new applications does the program typically receive and what percentage is funded? (A 20%-30% funding rate is good; if it's less than 20% you need to consider whether it's worth the effort.)
- The program officers have your abstract. Does your research fall within the funding agencies current priorities?
- What are the most common flaws in proposals they receive?
- What criteria are used in evaluating your proposal and relative weight given to each?
- Will they recommend a previously funded proposal for style or format? Can you obtain a copy?
- Who will evaluate your proposal; i.e., what background will the reviewers have? Would they send you a list of current or previous reviewers? (It is important to know the audience for which you will be writing.)
- Are there areas or topics of particular interest that the funding agency values?
- If you have last year's application guidelines, do they expect to make any significant changes? Can you use last year's information to get started?

## Tips for a Successful Visit

- Be prepared; research the funding opportunities on the sponsor's web site.
- Start by briefly describing your research.
- Inquire about the possibility of serving on a future review panel.
- Take lots of notes.