Prof. Beth Evans, Electronic Services Librarian, Brooklyn College - Writing a Research Grant Proposal

The session opened with Beth Evans sharing a game with the attendees; the theme of the game addressed diversity in research. She indicated that librarians have a variety of interests and that our research doesn’t always have to be specific to library science. There are grants awarded for things like “looking at artwork” and travel grants; for travel to “anywhere on earth.”

Beth also indicated that the PSC Research Award Program was established to encourage and support faculty research within the City University of New York.

As quoted from the PSC-CUNY.org page:

“The Professional Staff Congress-City University of New York (PSC-CUNY) Research Award Program was established as a major vehicle for the University's encouragement and support of faculty research and to leverage external funding. It seeks to enhance the University's role as a research institution, to further the professional growth and development of its faculty, and to provide support for both the established and the younger scholar. Awards are distributed by the University Committee on Research Awards, a faculty committee, and administered by the Research Foundation of CUNY. Preference is given to junior faculty in the allocation of funds.”

http://www.psc-cuny.org/user/reset/871/1384785667/f921e505d584456ef7756f5cf03430b6

There are three pots of grant money

- Traditional A – (TRADA) up to $ 3,500.00
- Traditional B – (TRADB) up to $5,462.00
- Enhanced Awards – (TRADC) up to $10,924.00

Reviewers will score grant applications on a scale of 1 through 5: 1 (Excellent)  2 (Very Good)  3 (Good) 4 (Fair)  5 (Poor)

The budget for your grant can go toward any of the following items listed

- General Office Supplies/Xeroxing
- Research Supplies
- Domestic Travel
- Foreign Travel
- Independent Contractors
- Subject Payments
- Laboratory Fees
- Equipment
- Manuscript Preparation/ Publication Costs
Beth advised that the reviewers will be looking for these key elements in the application:

- Originality of your proposal is key
- The scholarly and or scientific merits of the proposal
- Creative design – well conceived
- Original contribution to field
- What are the expected outcomes?
- What is the significance of the project?
- Is there evidence of past and ongoing scholarly or creative productivity or promise?
- Does the proposal demonstrate familiarity with scholarship?
- Does this project support curriculum development –
- Is there relevance to pedagogy
- They will want a list of your recent publications- not the entire CV

Prof. Janet Munch, Special Collections Librarian, Lehman College - Evaluating Research Grant Proposals: Reviewer's Perspective

Professor Munch began her presentation by mentioning the importance of applying for research grants. She indicated that the LACUNY Professional Development Committee has been involved with the Research Award Program for a long time and that applying for these grants helps with tenure and promotion.

Professor Munch indicated that the grant application has been scaled back and that they are not as long as they were in the past. At one time they were 20 pages or longer, but now they are as short as 5 pages.

Professor Munch advised that when writing your proposal, applicants should “use the space well.” Applicants should take time to look at the CUNY Research Foundation page. She noted that a Google Scholar search produced a large number of people who referenced the CUNY Research Foundation for their projects.

Professor Munch discussed “Problems: with grant applications” Some of the problems she mentioned were:

- Poor writing; It’s important to “state explicitly” the purpose of your grant. Anything that will help justify the intent of your project should be indicated.
- Disorganized thinking
- Methodology: many applicants do not understand research methodology. Research methods are important and will be judged; it was advised that attendees “Get a book and learn how to create and develop a case study.” Reviewers of your application will want to know how you picked the subjects for a survey or questionnaire.
It was advised that applicants “look at the evaluator’s guide” as a reference.

Applicants who plan to use human subjects for their projects should be sure the participants are in full agreement and are willing to take part in your study; many people or organizations may not want to participate. Be sure you have an official agreement with the participants before you begin. Write to the institution in advance and ask if they are willing and able to be part of a study for research purposes; and be sure you get approval from authorized people.

Applicants should review the literature published on the subject or topic they plan to do research on. The reviewers of your application will want you to show that you have “a command of the literature” They will want to know who has done research on this topic already?

Another variable to consider is feasibility? Applicants should ask themselves: Can this project be done? When writing the narrative, the abstract shouldn’t be too long; a third to half a page is not good for an abstract. Don’t write sentences that are too long, you will lose the reader. Brainstorm what you want to do and list them as bullet points. Chronology is also good, a timeline shows planning. Your CV shouldn’t be too long.

Keep in mind that the reviewers are going to ask: Why is the applicant focusing on this? Why is this important to them? Applicants should be able to elaborate on this. You can talk with the program officers or grant officers, some will edit the narrative for you.

*The deadline is December 15, but be aware of internal deadlines at your institution.

Become familiar with the Institutional Review Board at your school if you plan to use human subjects. It’s encouraged that you communicate with people at your school.

Have someone read your grant, an editor, or even a colleague. “It’s not about ego” when it comes to applying for a research grant, you want constructive feedback on your proposal. If possible, select an editor that understands grammar and “writing cult”. Have a native English speaker edit your proposal if English is not your first language. Read it out loud to yourself and talk to other colleagues who have applied for grants.

Mr. Richard Markgraf, Research Foundation of CUNY-PSC - CUNY Research Award Program

Richard opened his presentation by distributing a PSC-CUNY handout entitled: Research Award Program Cycle 45; it lists the various awards applicants can apply for. Detailed information regarding the TRADA, TRADB, and Enhanced Awards are presented in relation to the application, budget, reviews, awards, and applicant disputes.
The handout also provides a list of helpful web links and contact information:

- Marissa Marino – t: (212) 417-8464 e: Marisa_Marino@rfcuny.org
- Richard Markgraf – t: (212) 417-8475 e: Richard_Markgraf@rfcuny.org
- Margie Louie – t: (212) 417-8474 e: Margie_Louie@rfcuny.org

Richard said that the RF Website is one of the best resources to use. He displayed what a typical application looks like for attendees. In his demonstration, he pointed out the Budget section and advised applicants to be as detailed as possible when filling in this section.

The site also offers statistical information and a list of previous award recipients.

Richards displayed how the log in screen looks; he advised that many people call in for directions on how to log in. When applicants log in to create an account, they will have to follow the steps to the “My Profile” section. Fill in all of the required fields and select the award type. If an applicant has a previous application on file with the PSC-CUNY Research Award Program they will have to upload it.

75% of people who applied for the Traditional award received it. 40% of people who applied for the Traditional B award received it.

Richard advised that the reviewers look for keywords like “interviews” and “Institutional Review Board” when human subjects are being used for the project. Research supplies are the most common request; applicants must be able to justify their need for these supplies. There are 3 ways to use the funding: personnel, purchase order, and out of pocket expenses. All expenses have to be made during the project period and it has to occur in the project period. Spending funds have to be spent between July 1, 2014 and June 30, 2015. Fringe benefits are calculated for you. If applicants plan on traveling abroad or domestic they should check the per diem for food. Applicants will be directed to upload their supporting documents, 3 pages or less. Once submitted, it goes to your grants officer. The application notification will go out on April 15th. There is no appeal if your application is rejected.

Respectfully submitted,

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LACUNY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE’S
PSC-CUNY RESEARCH GRANT INFORMATION SESSION
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2013