



February 2015

Dear Faculty Colleagues:

I am reaching out to you to confirm that the Office of the Provost provides access to grant-writing support consultants for all tenured, tenure-earning and term faculty members who are writing applications for external research funding. Faculty members are encouraged to use these contracted consulting services which include (a) grant-writing training sessions and one-on-one consultations in person or remotely by Dr. Ralph Pollack and (b) application consultation and editing services by Ms. Louise Wides. To learn more about available grant-writing consulting services offered through the Office of the Provost please see the link: <http://www.american.edu/provost/osp/Assistance-with-External-Proposal.cfm>

In addition, resources exist in the Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) to assist faculty members to locate appropriate finding opportunities. These resources include online search resources to locate funding opportunities (<http://www.american.edu/provost/osp/Fund-Opps-online-resources.cfm>) as well as tailored search training opportunities (<http://www.american.edu/provost/osp/Training.cfm#fun>). The link to the OSP monthly newsletter which provides current information regarding funding opportunities and available resources to assist in the application writing process can be found at <http://www.american.edu/provost/osp/osp-monthly-newsletter.cfm>

To schedule an appointment with Dr. Pollack or Ms. Wides, please contact Anita Brown at [abrown@american.edu](mailto:abrown@american.edu) or x-6333. Questions regarding funding opportunities can be directed to [osp@american.edu](mailto:osp@american.edu) or x-3440.

Thank you.

Jonathan Tubman,  
Vice Provost for Research and Dean of Graduate Studies

# **Editorial Assistance for Proposal Writing at American University**

## **Why Would You Benefit from Our Assistance?**

- Writing a grant proposal is different from any other kind of writing.
- We have experience in developing, writing, reviewing, and editing proposals for funding.
- For more than 35 years, we have been facilitating the growth and success of professionals.
  - Dr. Pollack was a faculty member in the Chemistry & Biochemistry Department at the University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC) from 1970 to 2007 and has been Associate Vice President for Research at UMBC since 2007.
  - Ms. Wides was Assistant Staff Director for Information Services at the Federal Election Commission from 1985 to 2001, and has spent 40 years helping experts in a variety of fields explain their ideas to new audiences.
  - For more detail, see the attached Background sheet.
- There is no charge to you.

## **Who Should Utilize this Service?**

- All faculty and administrators who prepare any type of proposal for external funding.
- In particular:
  - New faculty.
  - Faculty who have never before secured external funding.
  - Groups of faculty collaborating on one grant proposal.
  - Principal Investigators (PIs) for whom English is not their first language.

## **What Services Are Provided?**

The kinds of support we provide depend upon the PI's wishes and needs and upon the timing of our involvement in the proposal preparation.

- Formulation of strategy for planning and developing the PI's proposal.
- Assistance in meeting the funding agency's application requirements and review criteria.
- Editorial help to improve the organization, clarity, and compelling message of the application.

## **Whom Should You Work With?**

- Dr. Pollack
  - All proposals for math, science, and business.
  - Government (state and federal) proposals for the social sciences.
- Ms. Wides
  - Foundation proposals for the social sciences, public policy, communications, and business.
  - All proposals in the arts and humanities.

## **The Process: What Does Dr. Pollack Do?**

- Provides editorial assistance to all PIs in the sciences, social sciences, math, and business.
- Meets with PI early in the process to discuss general strategy and the fundability of the idea.
- Helps determine whether the idea is appropriate for the specific funding agency.
- Helps develop a clear objective for the proposal and specific aims to further the objective.
- Helps set a timetable for writing.
- Reviews a one-to-two page summary of the proposal.
- Helps develop a proposal outline that addresses all of the funder's review criteria.
- Reviews the first draft—and suggests edits—of each section of the proposal.

- Works with PI to develop overall organization and to ensure that all review criteria are addressed.
- Conducts workshops on proposal writing.

### **The Process: What Does Ms. Wides Do?**

- Provides editorial assistance to PIs (individuals and cross-discipline teams) in the social sciences, public policy, business, communications, the arts, and the humanities.
- Meets early with PIs to learn about the proposal and to strategize the best approach for structuring the proposal.
- Ensures that the proposal satisfies the particular requirements and criteria of the funding organization.
- Works with PIs to clarify the purpose, focus, and “pitch” of their applications.
- Establishes consistent use of punctuation, grammar, syntax, and word choice.

### **Why Is Editorial Assistance Important?**

- Competition for grant funding is intense. An exceptionally well-written proposal captures the reviewer’s attention and interest immediately. That is your goal.
- The more effectively your proposal communicates the purpose, importance, and uniqueness of your project, the better your chances of receiving a serious review and securing the grant.
- Reviewers associate a clear, well-written proposal with a thoughtful, organized mind.
- Accurate and consistent language demonstrates the PI’s ability to give attention to detail — which reviewers regard as necessary to the successful execution of a grant project.

### **What Don’t We Do?**

- Develop budgets or provide other parts of proposal, e.g., draft letters of recommendation.
- Carry out supportive functions provided by OSP and other AU departments and offices.

### **How Much Time is Necessary Before the Due Date of the Proposal?**

- We recommend that you initiate discussions with us at the earliest stages of proposal preparation.
- It’s best to begin two months before the due date, if possible.

### **Contact Information?**

To schedule an appointment, contact Ms. Anita Brown ([abrown@american.edu](mailto:abrown@american.edu)) in the Office of Graduate Studies for a referral to either Dr. Pollack ([pollack@umbc.edu](mailto:pollack@umbc.edu)) or Ms. Wides ([lwides@verizon.net](mailto:lwides@verizon.net)).

### **Tips for Success**

- Allocate sufficient time for writing the proposal and having it edited by a third party.
- Obtain the funder’s guidelines and review criteria before you begin to write the proposal.
- Comply with the funder’s requirements as to categories of information, their order of presentation, and length of each section.
- Work with one “master” copy.
- Establish a timetable early on, or ask one of us to help you establish a timetable.
- Communicate with proposal colleagues (including us) often and clearly.
- Do not give up — resubmissions are often necessary.