How to Write a Lot: Simple Advice from a Scholar

Successful grantsmanship involves the coalescence of a variety of factors, such as having an original/creative idea and matching that idea to the right funders/programs. But one of the most important factors in successful grantsmanship is writing a lot, both grant proposals and journal articles, which is perhaps the most challenging part of getting funded.

To understand how to address this challenge, I sought and received recommendations from seasoned colleagues who recommended Dr. Paul Silvia’s short monograph, How to write a lot: A practical guide to productive academic writing. In prose sometimes reminiscent of Dave Barry’s, the author provides simple and compelling explanations for: 1) why we don’t write more and 2) for how to start writing more. Silvia (2009) blows holes in all of the usual excuses, such as not finding time to write (“When people endorse this specious barrier, I imagine them roaming through their schedules like naturalists in search of Time To Write, that most elusive and secretive of creatures” (p. 12)), and he offers solutions for eliminating these “specious barriers” to writing (p. 11).
Some of Silvia’s solutions to writing more may seem onerous, at least initially, but they are effective in helping a writer gain and maintain momentum. How to write a lot also contains brief chapters on style, writing journal articles, and writing books, each of which provides guidance, though not exhaustive, on tackling those areas.

Relatively concise at just 132 pages, this book offers solutions and encouragement to the discouraged or unproductive writer. Individuals looking for a quick read on writing more should find this book entertaining and useful. It’s available via Interlibrary Loan (no cost) or can be purchased for less than $15 from a number of booksellers (or you can take a look at my copy, if you want to skim it before requesting it).

Book Reviewed/Cited:

Internal Grants for Research Available

ASU has issued its annual request for applications for the Faculty Research Enhancement Program (FREP) grants. This competitive program supports original and innovative research and creative endeavor by faculty members at ASU. Here are just a few essential facts about this year’s competition:

- **Faculty Eligibility:** All full-time permanent faculty are eligible to apply for an FREP grant, except for current (2017-2018) FREP aware recipients.

- **Funding Period:** Under the current competition, the FREP grants support projects that will take place during the 2018-2019 academic year (Sep. 1, 2018 – Aug. 31, 2019).

- **Funding Available:** Applicants may request up to $15,000 to support their projects during the funding period.

- **Submission deadline:** Complete applications are due to department chairs on **Friday, January 19, 2018**

If you have any questions, please email or call the Director of Sponsored Projects at katie.plum@angelo.edu or 325-942-2530.

Upcoming Funding Opportunities

Health Resources and Services Administration

*R40 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Secondary Data Analysis Research (SDAR) Program*

**Submission deadline:** January 8, 2018

**Program description:** “This announcement solicits applications for the R40 Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Secondary Data Analysis Research (SDAR) Program. The MCH SDAR program supports applied MCH research that exclusively utilizes the secondary analysis of existing national databases and/or administrative records to improve the health and well-being of MCH populations.”

Institute of Education Sciences

Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation of Education Interventions

Submission deadlines: Letters of intent – January 11, 2018; Full proposals – March 1, 2018

Program description: “The Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation of Education Interventions (Low-Cost Evaluation) grant program is designed to support rigorous evaluations of education interventions (broadly defined as practices, programs, and policies) that state or local education agencies expect to produce meaningful improvements in student education outcomes within a short period (for example, within a single semester or academic year). These evaluations are to be conducted for $250,000 or less and completed within two years. The program will be carried out by research institutions and state or local education agencies working together as partners.”

Link to full announcement: https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/2018_84305L.pdf

Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation of Special Education Interventions

Submission deadlines: Letters of intent – January 11, 2018; Full proposals – March 1, 2018

Program description: “The Low-Cost, Short-Duration Evaluation of Special Education Interventions (Low-Cost Evaluation) grant program is designed to support rigorous evaluations of special education interventions (broadly defined as practices, programs, and policies) that state or local education agencies expect to produce meaningful improvements in student education outcomes within a short period (for example, within a single semester or academic year). These evaluations are to be conducted for $250,000 or less and completed within 2 years. The program will be carried out by research institutions and state or local education agencies working together as partners.”

Link to full announcement: https://ies.ed.gov/funding/pdf/2018_84324L.pdf

National Endowment for the Humanities

Digital Humanities Advancement Grants (DHAG)

Submission deadline: January 16, 2018

Program description: “Digital Humanities Advancement Grants (DHAG) support digital projects throughout their lifecycles, from early start-up phases through implementation and long-term sustainability. Experimentation, reuse, and extensibility are hallmarks of this grant category, leading to innovative work that can scale to enhance research, teaching, and public programming in the humanities.”

Link to full announcement: https://www.neh.gov/grants/odh/digital-humanities-advancement-grants

Humanities Initiatives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions

Submission deadline: June 26, 2018

Program description: “NEH Humanities Initiatives at Hispanic-Serving Institutions are intended to strengthen the teaching and study of the humanities, in subjects such as history, philosophy, literature, religion, and the interpretation of the arts. These grants may be used to enhance existing humanities programs, resources, or courses, or to develop new ones. Applicants are encouraged to draw on the knowledge of outside scholars who would contribute expertise and fresh insights to the project. Each project must be organized around a core topic or set of themes.”

Link to full announcement: https://www.neh.gov/grants/education/humanities-initiatives-hispanic-serving-institutions

National Institutes of Health

Education and Health: New Frontiers (R03)

Submission deadlines: Standard R03 deadlines apply; see full announcement for details
Program description: “The goal of this funding opportunity announcement is to support research that will further elucidate the pathways involved in the relationship between education and health outcomes and in doing so to carefully identify the specific aspects and qualities of education that are responsible for this relationship and what the mediating factors are that affect the nature of the causal relationship.”

Note: Companion funding opportunities under the R01 and R21 mechanisms are available


Health Services Research on Minority Health and Health Disparities (R01)

Submission deadlines: April 11, 2018 and April 11, 2019

Program description: “The purpose of this Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) is to encourage innovative health services research that can directly and demonstrably contribute to the improvement of minority health and/or the reduction of health disparities at the health care system-level as well as within clinical settings.”

Note: A companion funding opportunity under the R21 mechanism is also available


National Science Foundation

Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL)

Submission deadline: November 7, 2018

Program description: “The Advancing Informal STEM Learning (AISL) program seeks to advance new approaches to and evidence-based understanding of the design and development of STEM learning opportunities for the public in informal environments; provide multiple pathways for broadening access to and engagement in STEM learning experiences; advance innovative research on and assessment of STEM learning in informal environments; and engage the public of all ages in learning STEM in informal environments. The AISL program supports six types of projects: (1) Pilots and Feasibility Studies, (2) Research in Service to Practice, (3) Innovations in Development, (4) Broad Implementation, (5) Literature Reviews, Syntheses, or Meta-Analyses, and (6) Conferences.”


Broadening Participation in Engineering

Submission deadline: February 5, 2018

Program description: “The Broadening Participation in Engineering (BPE) Program is a Directorate-wide initiative dedicated to supporting the development of a diverse and well-prepared engineering workforce. Across every educational juncture (e.g., elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels), efforts to improve engineering interests, preparation, connections, experiences, and opportunities among underrepresented groups is of major importance to BPE.”

Link to full announcement: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=504870

Research in the Formation of Engineers (RFE)

Submission deadline: September 26, 2018

Program description: “The goal of the Research in the Formation of Engineers (RFE) program is to advance our understanding of professional formation. It seeks to both deepen our fundamental understanding of the underlying processes and mechanisms that support professional formation and to demonstrate how professional formation is or can be accomplished. Ultimately, RFE aims to transform the engineering formation system. Therefore, the impact of proposed projects on this system must be described in the proposal. Proposers should provide a roadmap detailing how they envision the proposed research will eventually broadly impact practice within the engineering formation system, even if these activities are not within the scope of the submitted proposal.”

Link to full proposal: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=503584
**Smart and Connected Communities (S&CC) Program**

**Submission deadlines:** Letters of intent (required) – January 30, 2018; Full proposals: February 28, 2018

**Program description:** “The goal of the NSF Smart and Connected Communities (S&CC) program solicitation is to accelerate the creation of the scientific and engineering foundations that will enable smart and connected communities to bring about new levels of economic opportunity and growth, safety and security, health and wellness, and overall quality of life. This goal will be achieved through integrative research projects that pair advances in technological and social dimensions with meaningful community engagement. … A proposal for an S&CC Integrative Research Grants must include the following: Integrative research that addresses the technological and social dimensions of smart and connected communities; Meaningful community engagement that integrates community stakeholders within the project; A management plan that summarizes how the project will be managed across disciplines, institutions, and community entities; and An evaluation plan for assessing short-, medium-, and long-term impacts of the proposed activities.”


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**U.S. Department of Agriculture**

**Methyl Bromide Transition**

**Submission deadline:** January 30, 2018

**Program description:** “The methyl bromide transition program (MBT) addresses the immediate needs and the costs of transition that have resulted from the scheduled phase-out of the pesticide methyl bromide. Methyl bromide has been a pest and disease control tactic critical to pest management systems for decades for soilborne and postharvest pests. The program focuses on integrated commercial-scale research on methyl bromide alternatives and associated extension activity that will foster the adoption of these solutions. Projects should cover a broad range of new methodologies, technologies, systems, and strategies for controlling economically important pests for which methyl bromide has been the only effective pest control option. Research projects must address commodities with critical issues and include a focused economic analysis of the cost of implementing the transition on a commercial scale.”

**Link to full announcement:** [https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/methyl-bromide-transition](https://nifa.usda.gov/funding-opportunity/methyl-bromide-transition)

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