



McALLISTER & QUINN
Winning Strategies. Proven Track Record.

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4/18/2025

Grant Funding 201

Overview & Strategies for Success

Today's presenter



Elizabeth Festa, PhD
Managing Director
Research Universities Practice

About McAllister & Quinn

► Washington, DC-based consulting firm

Founded in 2004.

Specialize in securing funding for a wide range of organizations.

► Team of grants experts

100+ staff from Legislative and Executive branches, academia, non-profits, & industry.

400+ grant writers, consultants & subject matter experts.

Overview of Today's Session

1. Grant funding refresher
2. Common proposal documents
3. Seeking feedback
4. Writing for the reviewer

Grant funding refresher

Why seek grant support?



Funding for your work



Time for your project



Awareness of trends



Opportunity to plan & think



Feedback on your work



Award and recognition



Broadened network

What is covered by grant support?



Research activities



Salary



Instrument development



Materials & supplies



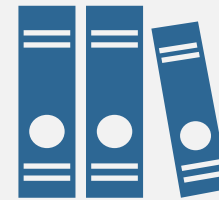
Student support



Travel



Conferences

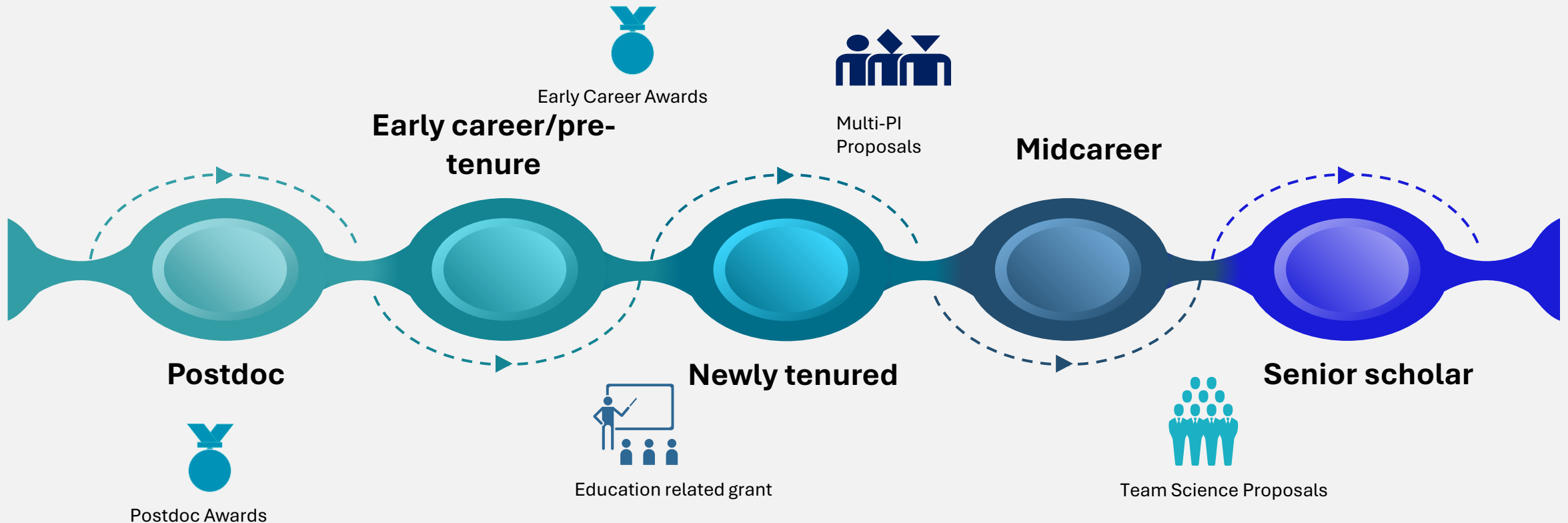


Curriculum development

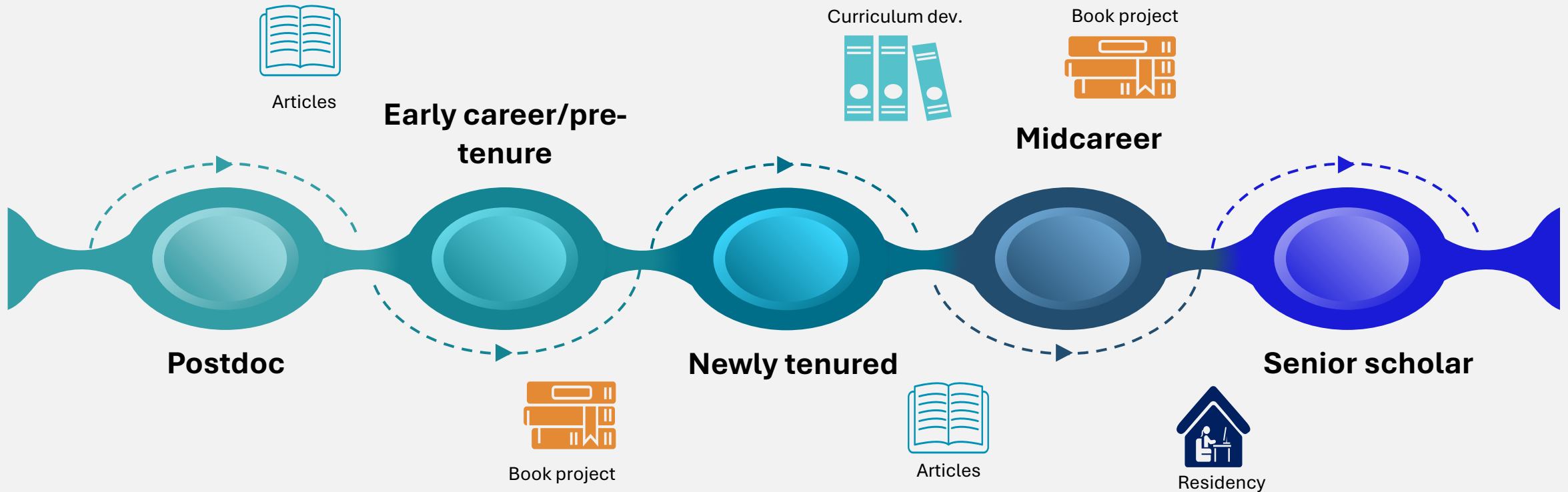


Education and outreach

Map funding onto your career path—social sciences, sciences



Map funding onto your career path- humanities, social sciences



Finding your place

Search federal funding pages for opportunities



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<https://www.moore.org/grants>

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FOUNDATION

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Foundation

[Grant Search - MacArthur Foundation](#)



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Inspiring Awe & Wonder

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[Grant Programs | Mellon Foundation](#)



[Fellowships & Grants - ACLS](#)



[How to Apply – John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation...](#)



[Grants Archive - Henry Luce Foundation](#)



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[Our grants - Ford Foundation](#)



[Funding Priorities | RSF](#)



[Open Calls](#)



[Grants and Fellowships | Wenner-Gren Foundation](#)



[Social Science Research Council \(SSRC\) | Social and behavioral science for the public good](#)

Review past awards

Read abstracts on
topics close to
yours

Glean what's been
funded recently



[Award Search | PAMS](#)



[Grant – Defense Technical
Information Center](#)



[RePORT } RePORTER](#)



[NSF Award Search:
Simple Search.](#)



[NEH Award Search](#)

Understanding the proposal as an academic genre



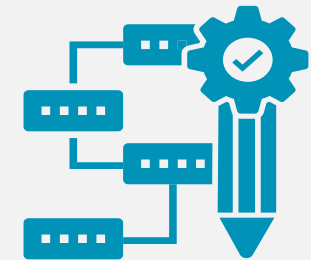
Research story



Critically embedded



Fills a gap or need



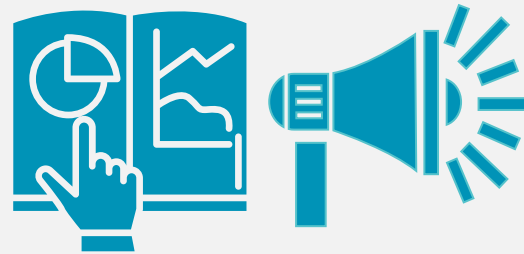
Deductive presentation

Journal article v. proposal: similarities

How is a proposal unique among academic genres?



Individual passion v. agency mission



Explanatory v. persuasive

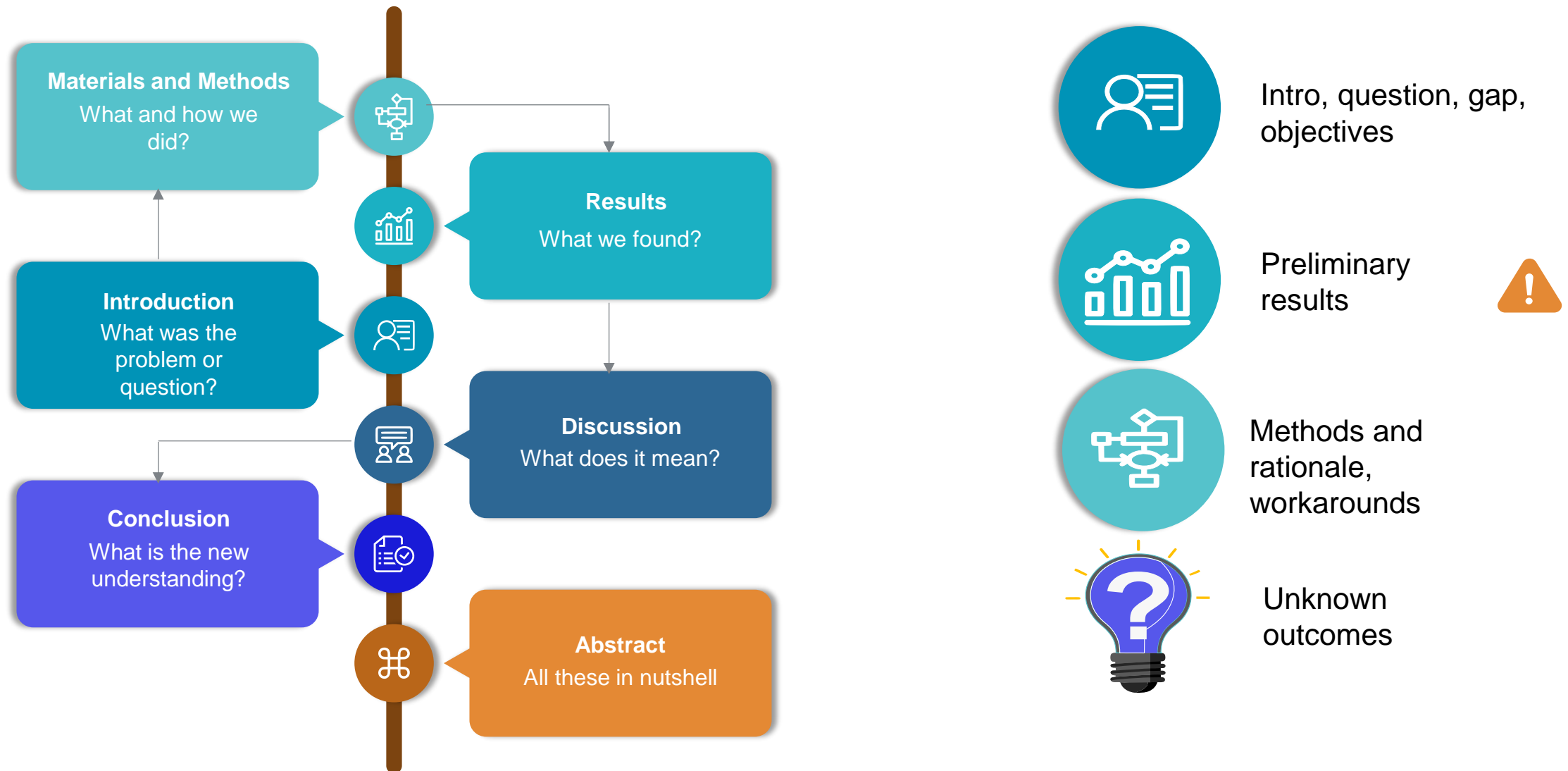


Past orientation v. Future orientation

Journal article v. proposal: key differences

Deep dive: common proposal documents

Proposals are high risk endeavors



01

*Narratives (1-pager;
full narrative)*

02

Work plan

03

References

04

*Resume/biosketch**

05

*Budget & Budget
justification*

06

Institutional data

07

*Data management
plan*

08

*Project Sites or
Performance sites*

09

*Writing samples or
portfolio*

10

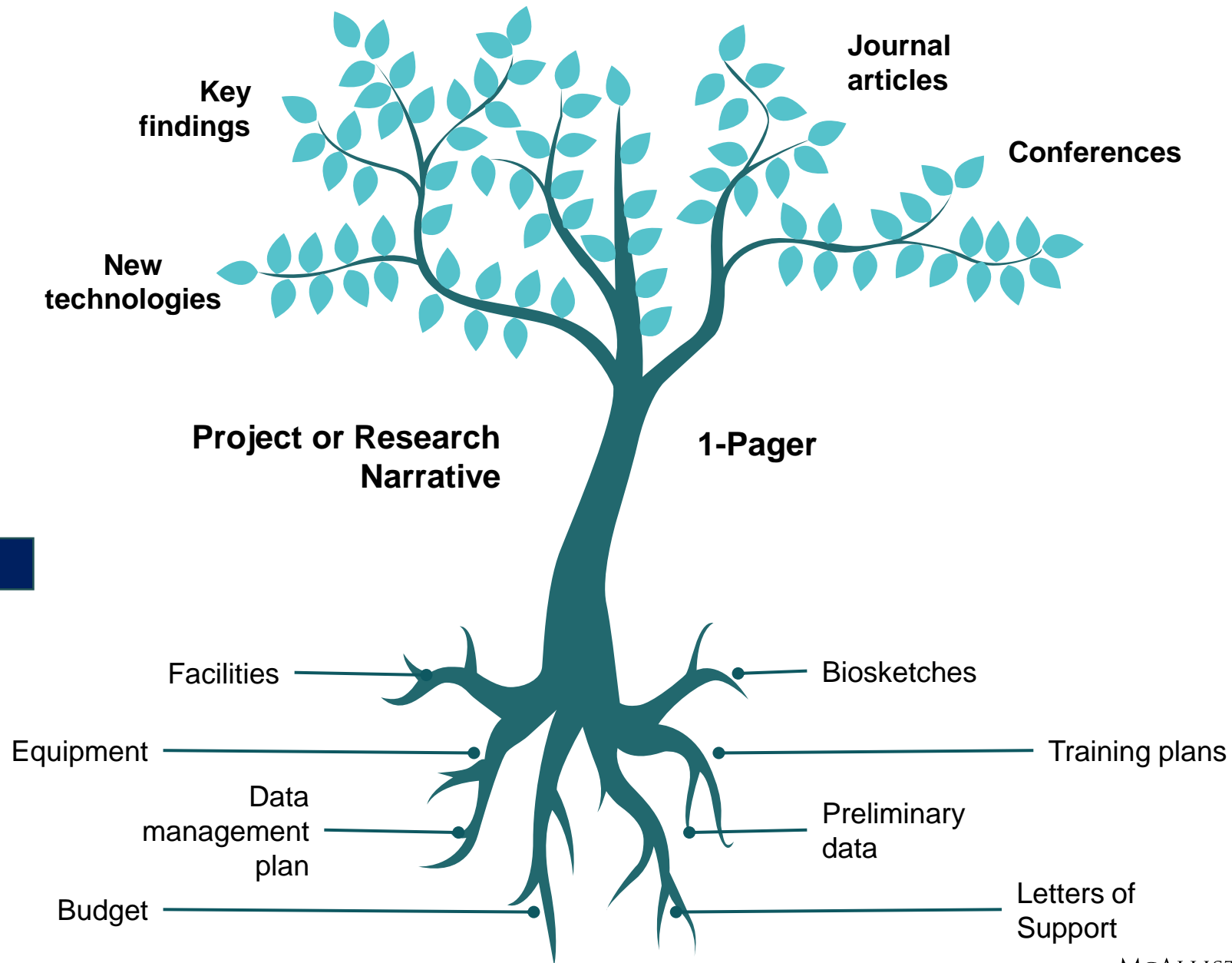
*Letters of
recommendation*

11

*Letters of collaboration
or support*

A proposal
is an
argument
for a project
that you *will*
do...
bolstered by
the
evidence
that you can
do it





Biosketch best practices



COMPLIANT

Follow the agency requirements *exactly* (order of dates, titles of headers, content, length, URLs)



TAILORED

Emphasize skills, experiences, leadership roles, and research that supports *this* proposal



COHESIVE

Ensure team members' biosketches reinforce the team's history together and strengths

What is the purpose of facilities/equipment docs?

Facilities and equipment testifies to your ability to your ability to meet the objectives you've outlined in your proposal. You should include facilities for all team members and participating organizations. Facilities and equipment requirements vary by agency and opportunity. Do not reference monetary values in these resources or report on materials or services for which you've budgeted.



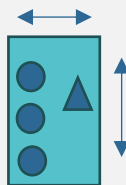
Lab equipment



Shared equipment



Space for meetings



Lab space & features



Computing resources



Library & other curricular resources and offices



Animal resources



Human resources

Facilities & equipment should be specific to the project

- ✓ Include only the equipment and facilities that you will use in *this* proposal ★
- ✓ Describe the particulars of how campus resources (Libraries, Center for Teaching, tutoring and mentoring programs, etc.) will support your project
- ✓ Tailor/reshape university and department boilerplate to highlight features, programs, key strengths, and demographics that are relevant to your proposal
- ✓ Include photographs of special equipment, unique lab spaces, or impressive buildings along with informative captions
- ✓ Consider adding details about proximity if appropriate (e.g., distance between you and collaborating institutions)
- ✓ Homogenize the formatting across collaborating institutions' and team members' facilities

What is a DMP and how can it be helpful to you?



DMP Tool

A Data Management Plan(DMP) describes in detail the types of data you will collect, and how you will organize, manage, secure, preserve, and share your data, both within your team and with other scholars. DMP requirements vary by agency



Prevents against data loss or duplication



Facilitates collaboration between you and your team members



Outlines roles and responsibilities for data stewardship



Helps to “future proof” your data



Enables reproducibility of your research



Promotes open science



Types of Data	Organizing & Managing Data	Disseminating & Sharing Data	Storing & Archiving Data	Safeguarding data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What types of data, software, curriculum, code will you produce? • What volume of data will you produce? • What is the level of aggregation of your data? • How will you ensure the quality of your data? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What data standards will you use to document/analyze your data? • Are your data standards open or proprietary? • What metadata will you provide? • Who on your team will be responsible for organizing, managing, and documenting your data? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the procedures for requesting data? • Where will you publish your data and metadata? • What is your timeline for making your data available? • Are there different tiers/levels of access to your data? • Will you make use of open sources, repositories, and other more active plans for dissemination? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you store data over the course of your project? • Where will your data be located? • What are your institution's policies for storing data? (and how do those compare to those of the agency?) • Will your data be retired at any point? 	<p>Do you have confirmation of your right to collect and share data?</p> <p>How does national security, privacy, proprietary knowledge, competitiveness, or the need to protect of human subject data or personally identifiable data influence the plan you've developed?</p> <p>Are there additional levels of protection that you need to implement to safeguard data?</p> <p>Do you need to budget to ensure you can maintain an effective plan?</p>



What is FAIR?

Findability

Accessibility

Interoperability

Reusability



GitHub



What types of expenses might be included in a budget?



Salary



Travel



Fringe



Materials &
Supplies



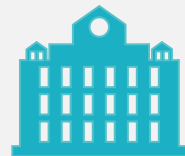
Equipment



Consultant
fees



Participant
expenses



Budget for
subawardees

Direct costs



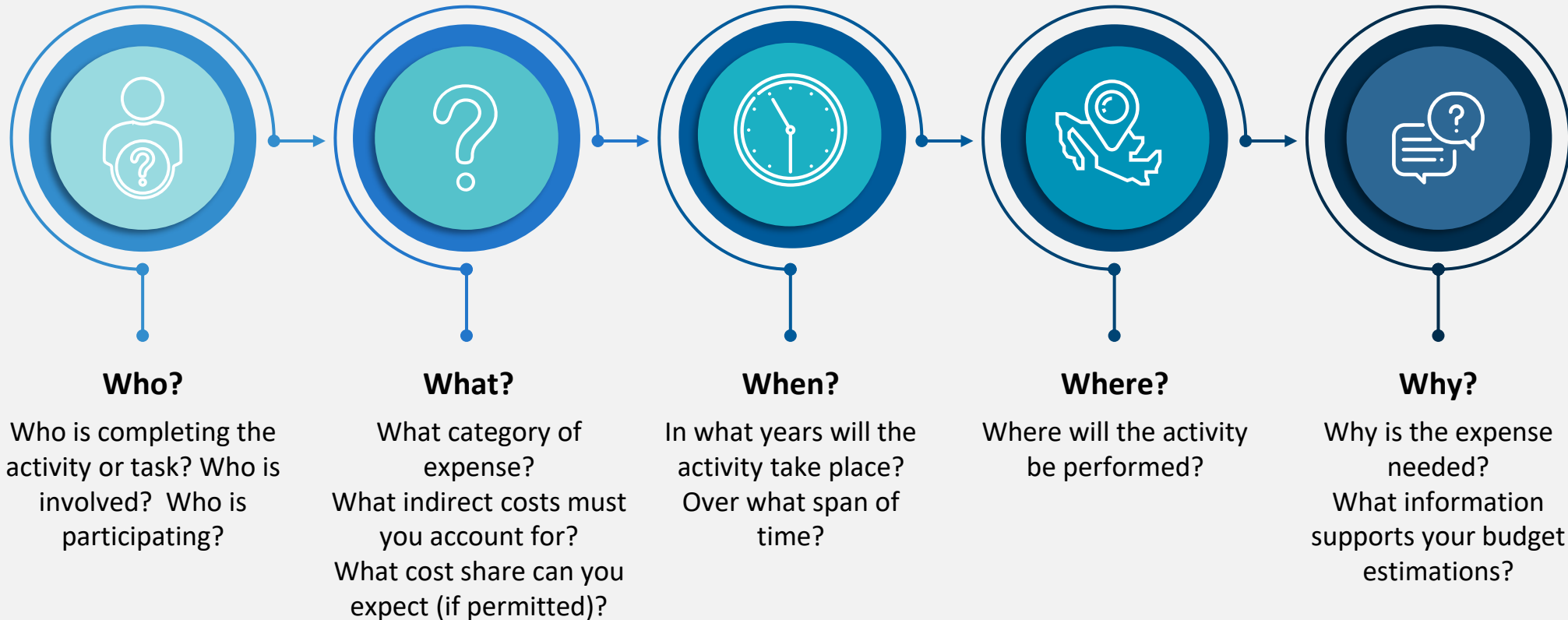
Indirect costs
“F &A”
“Overhead”



Cost share
(if required
or permitted)

What is the budget justification?

The detailed breakdown, explanation, and rationale for the expenses you have identified in your budget



Sample considerations for budget justification

- What are the salaries and fringe for each team member? (faculty, staff, postdoc)
- What stipend is required for students? Will salaries increase across the grant period?
- What tasks are each of the team members supporting and in what years/months of the grant? How much effort will be assigned to each team member?
- Do you need to hire an external consultant to evaluate your grant? If so, what percentage of your grant budget has this person requested?

What will the equipment cost? Do you have vendors quotes? Will you need hire a technician to maintain the equipment?

What materials and supplies do you need?

Which charges are allowable under the terms of the grant?

Which conferences are you traveling to? (Domestic? International?) Are you required to travel to the agency for a meeting? Will you travel to receive or test equipment? Will you travel for team meetings?

What is your federally negotiated F & A rate?

Evaluation Plan considerations

Do you need an evaluation plan?

Check your NOFO
Talk to your PO

01

Who may/should serve as an evaluator?

Internal to team?
External to team?
External to university?
Advisory board?

02

What portions of the project must be evaluated?

The entire project
Just one portion (e.g., education)

03

How much should you budget for evaluation?
Percentage of project?

Flat rate
Hourly rate?
Travel for evaluators?

04

05

What will you evaluate?

What do you want to learn from your evaluation?

06

How will you evaluate?

Validated instruments
Focus groups
Surveys
Mixed methods

07

At what points on your timeline will you perform evaluations?

Benchmarking
Formative evaluations
Summative evaluations

Evaluation & Assessment



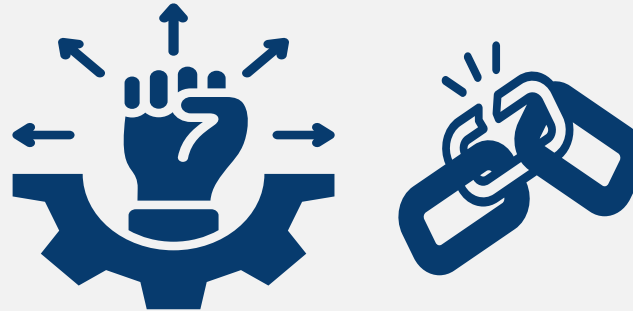
Seeking feedback

Seeking feedback

Role of Program Officers



Advise you on your fit for their program or refer you to another program



Offer input on the strengths and weaknesses of your concept



Select reviewers



Concept Paper Template

Part 1 Explain the Problem

What is the problem?
What is known/unknown about this problem?
What is the critical need?
Why is important for you/society to fill these gaps?
How is this problem a fit for the funder's mission?

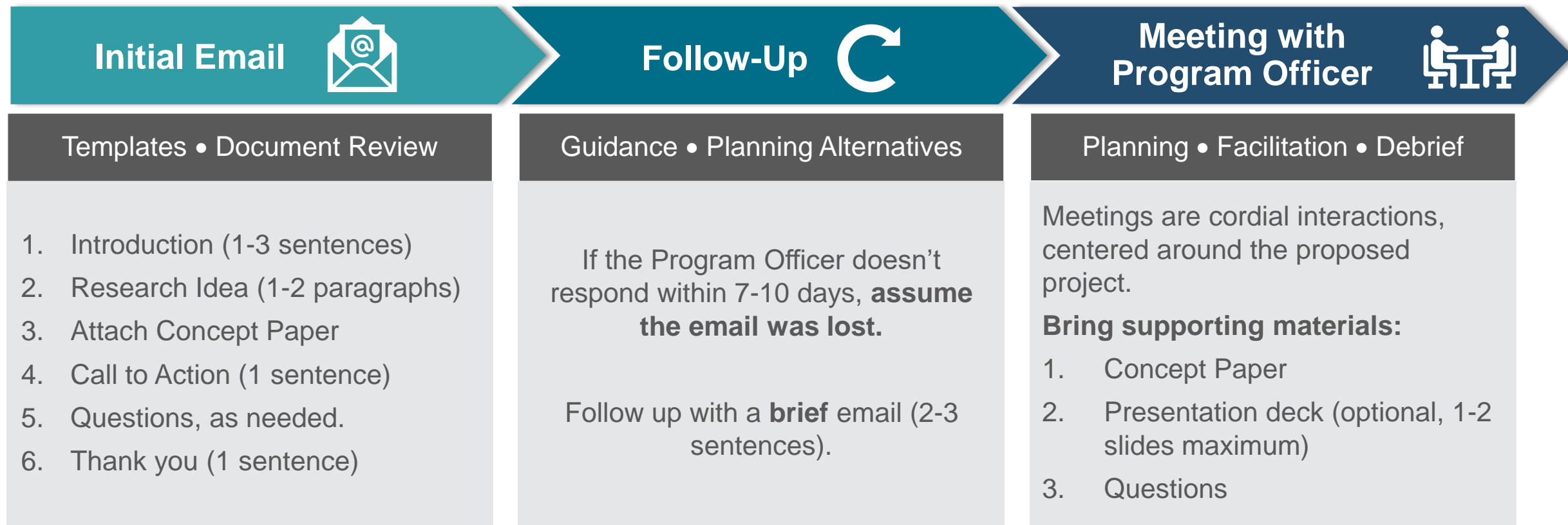
Part 2 Explain your Solution

What are your short- and long-term goals?
What are your objectives and the endpoints for the proposed work?
What is your hypothesis and how are you testing it? (if applicable)
What is your experimental approach?
Why are you / your team the best qualified to undertake this project?

Part 3 Explain why the agency should care

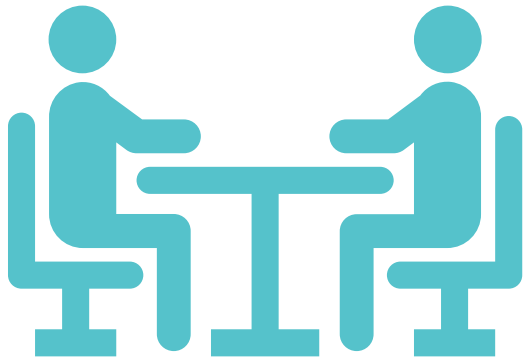
What is novel, different or innovative about your project?
What outcomes, deliverables do you anticipate coming out of this project?
How will you know if your project is successful?
How will you accomplish your objectives with the funding requested?
What will change because of this project? What will be the positive impacts for the funder / the discipline / society?

Contacting Program Officers



★ *Consider marketing your concept to multiple Program Officers*

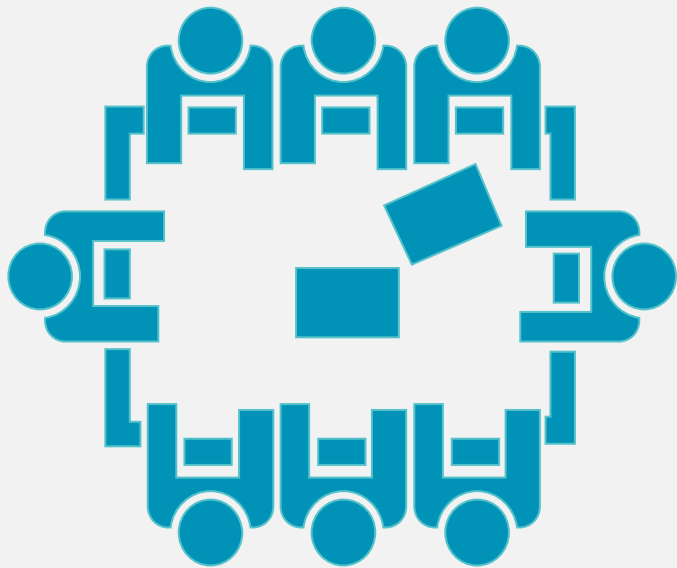
Seeking feedback from peers



- 1.** Obtain feedback from those in your discipline but outside your sub-field *and* from scholars outside your discipline
- 2.** Ask for reviews of portions of the draft rather than an entire draft
- 3.** Ask peers to focus on content and higher-order writing concerns
- 4.** Allow enough time for the review-- and subsequently, the revision process

Writing for the reviewer

Reassuring the reviewer



- 1.** Persuade at the outset through a tight one-pager
- 2.** Mitigate risk through preliminary data and contingency planning
- 3.** Ensure integration of all sections of proposal and ancillary documents
- 4.** Add visuals to highlight objectives, methods, tasks/timeline, leadership, and collaborations
- 5.** Write for clarity and organization

Craft the perfect “one-pager”

Crucial document

Revise it *multiple* times

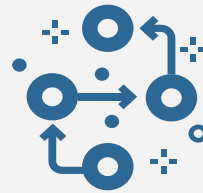
Sets the stage for your proposal

- Brief background on your topic
- The problem or question you are addressing and why it's important in your field
- How other scholars have addressed it
- What remains unknown or unsolved
- Your plan for filling this gap
- Preliminary results
- Objective/aims/thrusts/phases
- Significance and impact

Incorporating preliminary data



Establishes motivation or need for the research



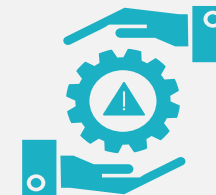
Demonstrates support for your approach/methods



Demonstrates support for your hypothesis



Bolsters your credibility



Reduces risk & perception of risk

Where should you incorporate preliminary data?

Intro or Background

If results establish motivation or the significance of your work

Approach or Methods

If your innovation is in methods or if the feasibility of your methods might be questioned

Separate sub-section

If you want to showcase your preliminary results and consider them at greater length

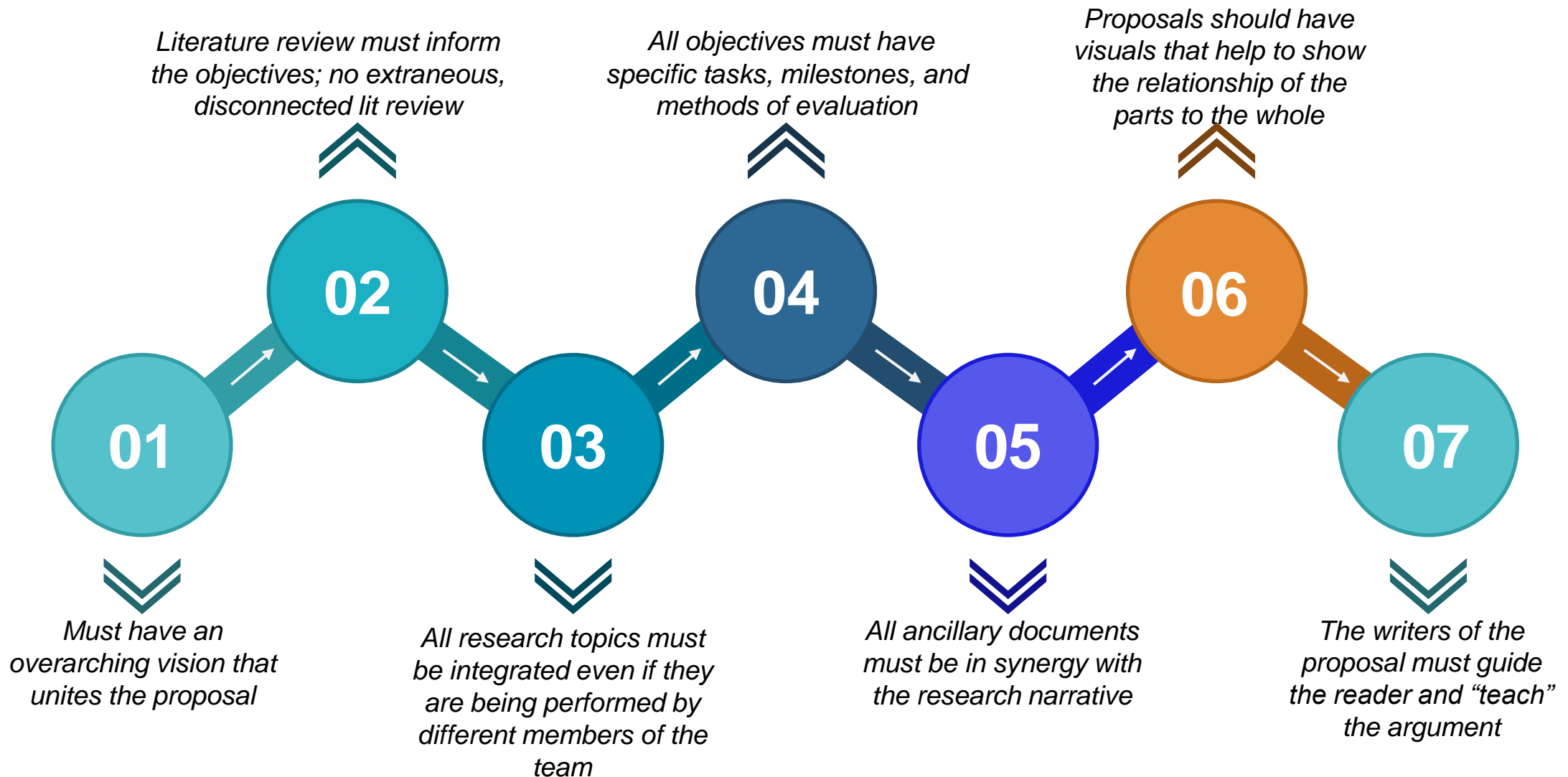
Graphics and or References

If you've published your findings or if visualizing your preliminary results will be persuasive

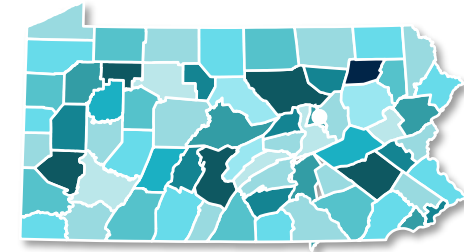
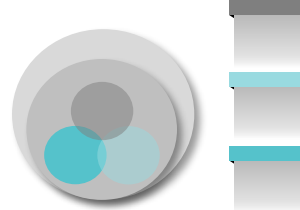
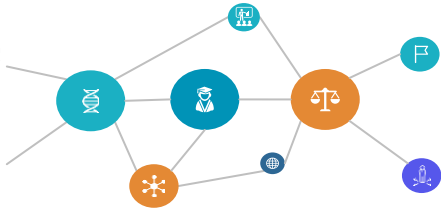
Tips for incorporating preliminary results

- ✓ Focus mainly on those studies that are relevant to your project
- ✓ If you have a separate preliminary results section, include brief descriptions of past studies rather than a list of abstracts
- ✓ Identify what makes results of pilots or previous studies significant; include test statistics and p-values as appropriate
- ✓ Add detail in areas where you anticipate the reviewer may have concerns (e.g., procedures you have used to recruit participants)
- ✓ Consider mentioning previous studies that are not directly related *if they testify to skills or experiences your team needs for this project*

Ensure your proposal is *integrated*



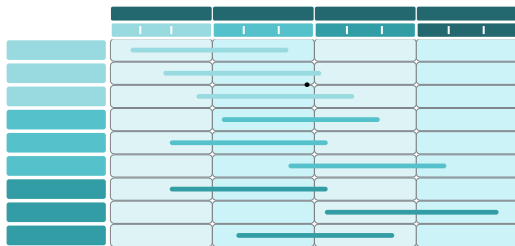
Include high-impact graphics



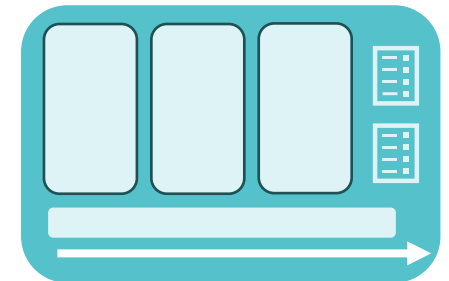
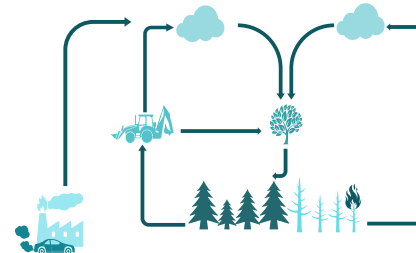
Chord & network diagrams

Organization charts

Maps



Gantt charts & Timelines



Conceptual diagrams & “Grant in a Box” figures

Tips for incorporate graphics into proposals

Well-wrought graphics can complement your text, demonstrate your thoughtfulness in preparing your proposal, and create “breathing room”

- ✓ Ensure graphics are large enough to view easily without zooming in
- ✓ Include clear, concise captions
- ✓ Highlight key data and “take-away”—easily interpretable
- ✓ Uses a consistent, appropriate, and visually accessible color palette
- ✓ Labeling is consistent, figures and tables are referenced in text

Major concerns for revision



Respond to every requirement in the FOA using the order and nomenclature of the grant



Identify research questions and the significance early in the proposal



Demonstrate knowledge of the literature on your topic (including recent literature)



Describe methods and theories clearly and for an audience outside your niche












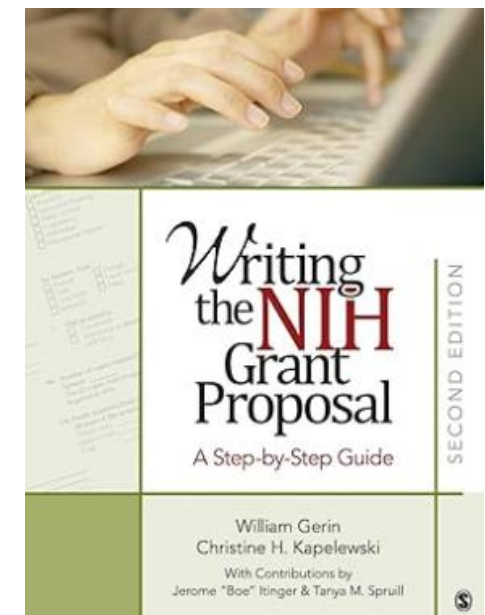
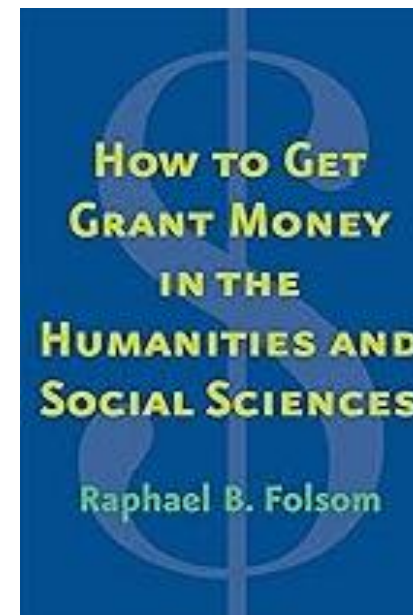
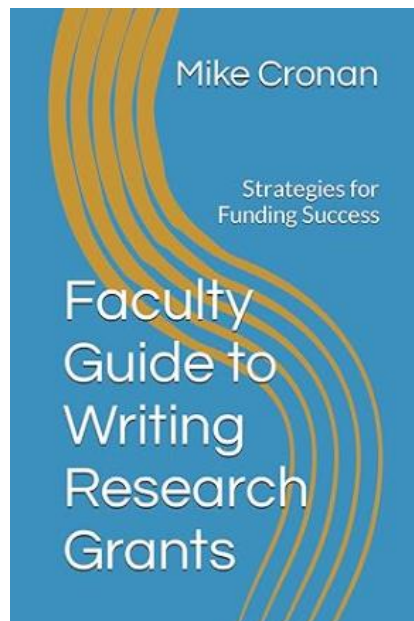
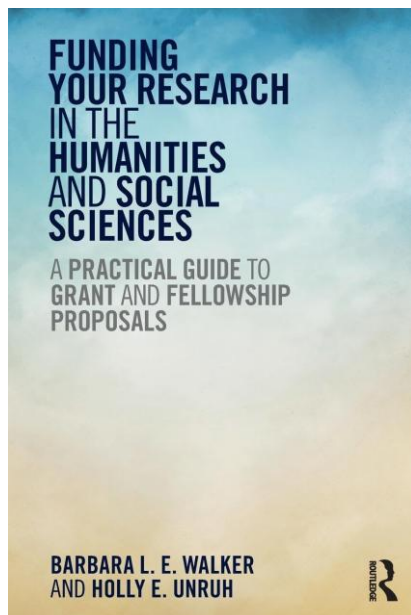
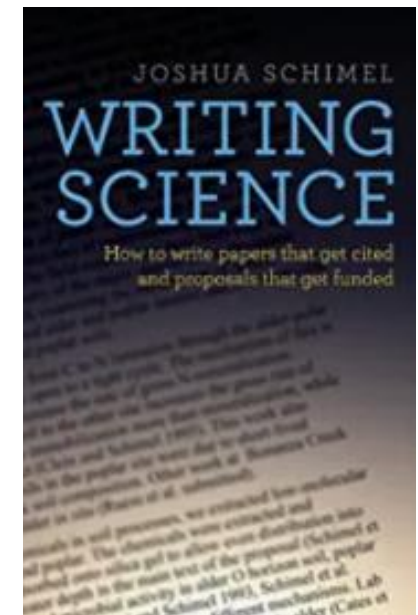
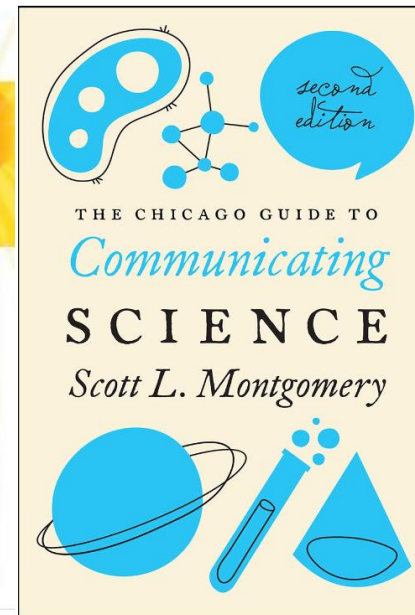
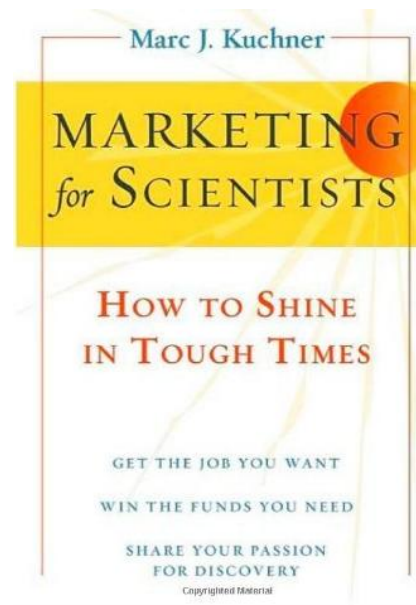
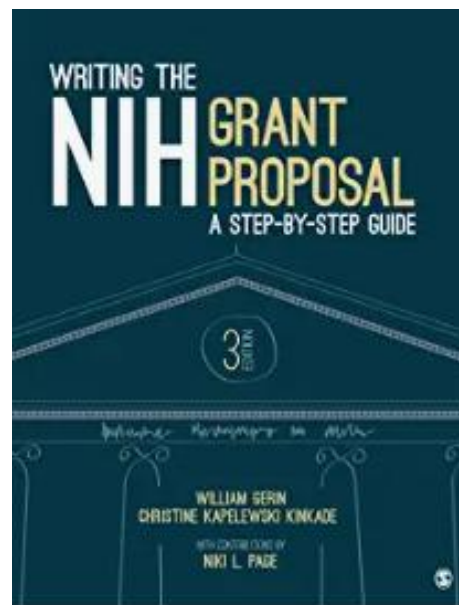
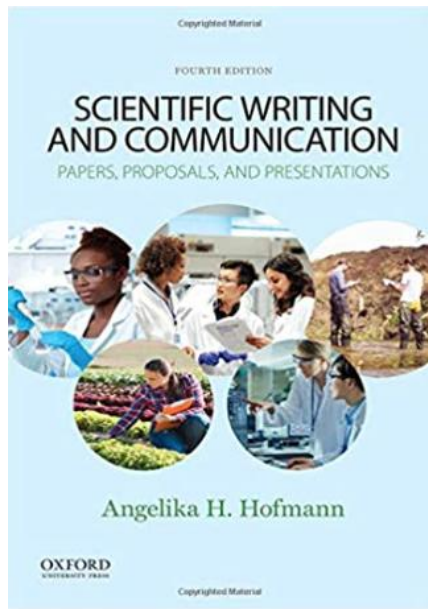
Tailor all supporting documents to the opportunity to the greatest degree possible



Forge a tight connection between supporting documents and the main narrative

Polishing your narrative

-  Q1. Is there appropriate paragraphing and strong topic sentences for each paragraph?
-  Q2. Is there metadiscourse to signpost key information and alert the reviewer to turns in the argument?
-  Q3. Are sentences clear, short, and engaging to read?
-  Q4. Does the proposal employ headers for grant requirements that help a reviewer locate required info?
-  Q5. Does the proposal define key terminology and reduce jargon to the greatest extent?
-  Q6. Is there strategic use of formatting, such as boldface or italics, to indicate key points?
-  Q7. Are graphics attractive and easy to read?
-  Q8. Is the document free from typos and other proofreading errors?
-  Q9. Is the formatting compliant (pitch, font, margins, spacing, page limits, and naming conventions for files?)





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