Top 10 Tips on How to get Funding

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1. **Make a cost/benefit decision.** Decide whether you want to go after external funding. As Dan Hamermesh once told me, there are two units of academic currency: articles and grants. The opportunity cost of writing a competitive grant proposal is high, and you may be better suited to writing articles.
2. **Make yourself valuable.** Develop a set of demonstrable core competencies through your publications. Your cv is your portfolio of skill sets, and you will be judged on your ability to deliver. Don't submit a proposal before you have a few publications under your belt in the relevant area.
3. **Get to know the funding sources.** Different funding sources have different missions and different criteria. Your sponsored research office (SRO) should be able to help you get this information, and you should also peruse the foundation websites. NSF, for example, funds basic research, so intellectual merit and broader impact, are the key criteria. Foundations have specific goals in terms of advancing a particular agenda. Government agencies have specific missions. Don't forget about doing consulting work, particularly if you can turn the information gleaned from the work into an insightful publication. Identify the funding source which has the greatest overlap with your research interest and invest heavily in getting to know more about their interests.
4. **Get to know the key people.** If you are going after grants, get in touch with the cognizant program officer. It is their job to know about their foundation, and they will often know about upcoming opportunities at both their foundation and others. But don't waste their time. A courteous email which provides a concise outline of your research idea, and connects it to their mission is a much better introduction than a phone call out of the blue.
5. **Get to know the community by presenting at their conferences.** This helps in several ways. First, a good presentation helps establish you as competent and explains your research agenda beyond your proposal. Second, the networking with others who have been successful at getting grants helps you get a better sense of the funding source's portfolio, and the style of research they support. Third, members of the community will typically be asked to review any grant proposal you submit.
6. **Submit your first few grants with senior colleagues who have been successful in getting grants.** Grant writing is a skill that is not typically taught in graduate schools, and on the job training is the best way to learn how to acquire that skill.
7. **Write well and have a focus.** In your opening paragraph, state your focus. Every sentence that you write in the grant should develop your key idea. Write clear prose that assumes the reader is an expert, but not necessarily deeply embedded in your project. You should have a clear and logical beginning, a middle, and an end to your proposal. Write multiple drafts and eliminate verbosity, jargon and extraneous sentences. Cite other

research that relates to your idea, but make it clear how your work fills an important gap in that research.

8. **Ask for feedback.** It's very important to get others to read your proposal and make critical suggestions so that you submit the strongest possible proposal to the funder. There are reputation consequences to submitting poor proposals.

9. **Resubmit.** If you get good, constructive, reviews, consider resubmitting the proposal. Consult with the program officer before doing so, and spend a lot of time making sure you address each point carefully.

10. **Deliver.** Most foundations are interested in developing an academic community that studies a set of problems related to their mission. Once you get that first grant, make sure you deliver on what you promised. Let the program officer know about your publications, presentations, and other visible consequences of their investment in you. The more valuable that your research is, and the more active you are in the professional community, the more likely it is that the funding agency will continue to support you throughout your career.