

Persuasive Writing

Begin with the Benefit

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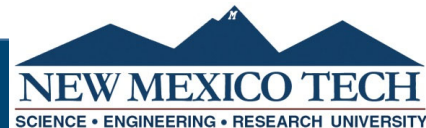
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Taken in part from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PPhYt_T87So

Research Office



The Curse of Knowledge

The main cause of incomprehensible prose is the difficulty of imagining what it's like for someone else not to know something that you know. (Steve Pinker, *The Sense of Style*)

The curse of knowledge is the single best explanation of why good people write bad prose. It simply doesn't occur to the writer that her readers don't know what she knows—that they haven't mastered the argot of her guild, can't divine the missing steps that seem too obvious to mention, have no way to visualize a scene that to her is as clear as day. And so the writer doesn't bother to explain the jargon, or spell out the logic, or supply the necessary detail.

The key is to assume that your readers are as intelligent and sophisticated as you are, but that they happen not to know something you know.

WITH A LITTLE PRACTICE,
WRITING CAN BE AN
INTIMIDATING AND
IMPENETRABLE FOG!



First Rule in Proposal Writing - Get Read



- Get Submitted
- Make the Program Officer happy
- Make your reviewers happy



A always

B be

Compliant

A alter

I int

A

What does it mean to be Compliant?

Follow the Directions in the Solicitation

The Project Description must have these section headers exactly.

- **Research Goals:** Provide a brief description of the PI's overall research goals.
- **Research Project:** Provide a clear outline of the general plan of work including the research questions or hypotheses, the broad design of activities to be undertaken, and, where appropriate, a clear description of experimental methods and procedures. The proposal should include the motivation for the research and a discussion of the novelty of the work in the context of existing literature. The project description should also discuss mechanisms and plans for assessing success of the proposed activities. The proposed single-PI activities may include activities to catalyze partnerships. The potential partner(s) must be named as Senior Personnel (see PAPPG I1.C.2). Partnership activities may enable access to instrumentation or resources, activities that establish a working relationship such as formulating new and sound plans for larger-scale projects in emerging research areas, travel for the PI or trainees to strengthen the partnership, or other activities. Note that Subawards to R1 institutions are not permitted. Proposals that include a request for equipment must follow the PAPPG (I1.C.2.g.iii).
- **Broader Impacts:** Provide a discussion of the broader impacts of the proposed activities. Broader impacts may be accomplished through the research itself, through the activities that are directly related to specific research projects, or through activities that are supported by, but are complementary to the project, such as education activities.
- **ERI Criteria:** Provide a brief description of how the proposed work addresses the solicitation-specific review criteria, as described in the "Additional Solicitation Specific Review Criteria" section below.

Follow the Directions in the Solicitation

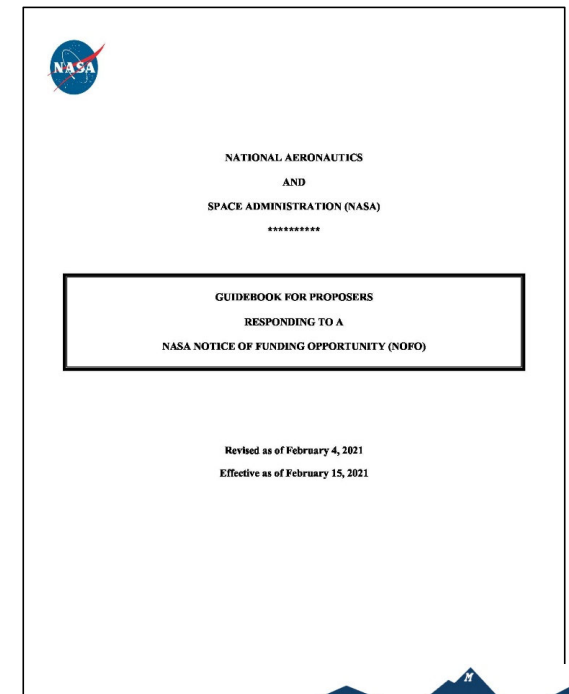
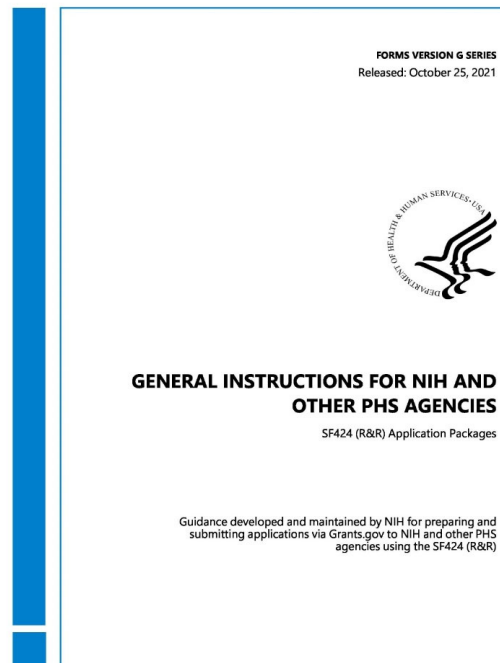
Section 1.2 - Project Objective(s) and Proposed Advances in Knowledge/ Technology

Section 1.2 should provide a clear, concise statement of the specific objective(s) of the proposed research as they relate to the Research Objectives of the FOA. The Applicant should clearly demonstrate that the proposed research, along with any tools or technologies associated with this research, addresses the problems and limitations of knowledge and technology identified in Section 1.1. It should clearly describe the scientific and engineering principles upon which the proposed tools or technologies are based, along with the specific advances that will be made over current knowledge, research, or state-of-the-art technology. The Applicant should clearly document the degree of readiness of the proposed technology for further development. In addition, the applicant should document the extent of the technology development that will occur during the project. This includes addressing the appropriateness of the proposed testing as well as the proposed field site (if applicable). The Applicant should also provide clear evidence that the proposed research is not duplicative of any ongoing or planned research by industry, academia, or other entities.

What does it mean to be Compliant?

Follow the Directions in the Research Guide

- Meet all the requirements
- Page numbers, font, headings, additional documents



Third Rule in Proposal Writing

Know Your Audience

- Connecting with your audience is a key part of persuading your audience.
- They need to know that you respect their time, their needs, and their challenges
- Who will read this?
- Why should they care?
- What do they want to achieve?



Write to Your Reviewers

- **DO NOT** write the application for yourself, unless you plan to fund it yourself
- You **MUST** convince an entire review panel, the Program Officer, and the funding agency

- Reviewers have varied experience
- First-time reviewers to veterans
- Subject matter experts to generalists with minimal knowledge in the field

Limited time for reading your proposal

Review many proposals

Do not have time to find information that is not well organized, clear, visual, or highlighted

How Do Reviewers Read Proposals?

- Reviewers approach to your proposal is similar to how you approach reading a technical paper. Reviewers attempt to understand complex information quickly and clearly and, most importantly, to determine whether or not the value of the proposal warrants a closer reading
- Reviewers look for shortcuts that help them do an “end run” around organizational structure of the document in a non-linear way
- This approach helps to more quickly determine whether or not there is value to be gained from continued reading

<http://www.sciencemag.org/careers/2016/03/how-seriously-read-scientific-paper>



Proposals are a Sales Document

Technical Writing

- Function/utilitarian
- Journal Articles
- Drab and Descriptive
- Tell them what you have done

Persuasive Writing

- Sales/Marketing
- Proposals
- Passionate, even argumentative
- Tell them what you will do and why they need you to do it

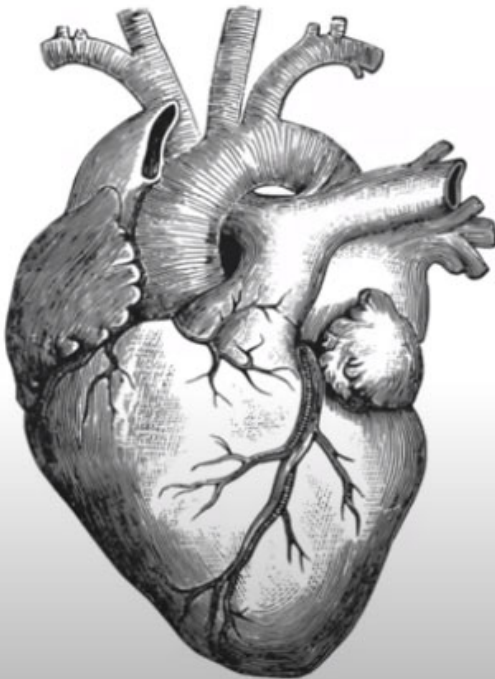


Academic Writing versus Grant Writing

Academic Writing	Grant Writing
Scholarly pursuit - Individual passion	Sponsor goals - Service attitude
Past Oriented - What has been done	Future Oriented - What should be done
Theme-centered - Theory and thesis	Project-centered – Activities
Expository rhetoric – Explaining	Persuasive rhetoric - “Selling”
Impersonal tone: Objective	Personal tone: Excitement
Individualistic	Team-focused: Feedback needed
Few length constraints	Strict length constraints
Specialized terminology	Accessible language

Academic Writing

Grant Writing



VS.



Write in an Active Voice

First person active

I am pioneering technique X.

Third person active

Dr. McShannon is pioneering technique X.

Our Center is pioneering technique X.

Passive

Technique X is pioneered by Dr. McShannon



Start with the Benefits



EVERYTHING
has a benefit

Start your proposal with the WHY, who, and what of your proposed research

Key Concepts

Features	Discrete aspects of your idea, approach, or solution
Benefits	How it can help your funder Advantages that solve a funder's problem
Differentiators	Features unique to what you are offering AND are important to the funder

Key Concepts

Feature(s)	Spectral imagining, interdisciplinary team
Benefits	Able to see things that were previously missed Enables scholarship on endangered artifacts
Differentiator(s)	This team is the only team that can offer their technology to access new information for other scholars

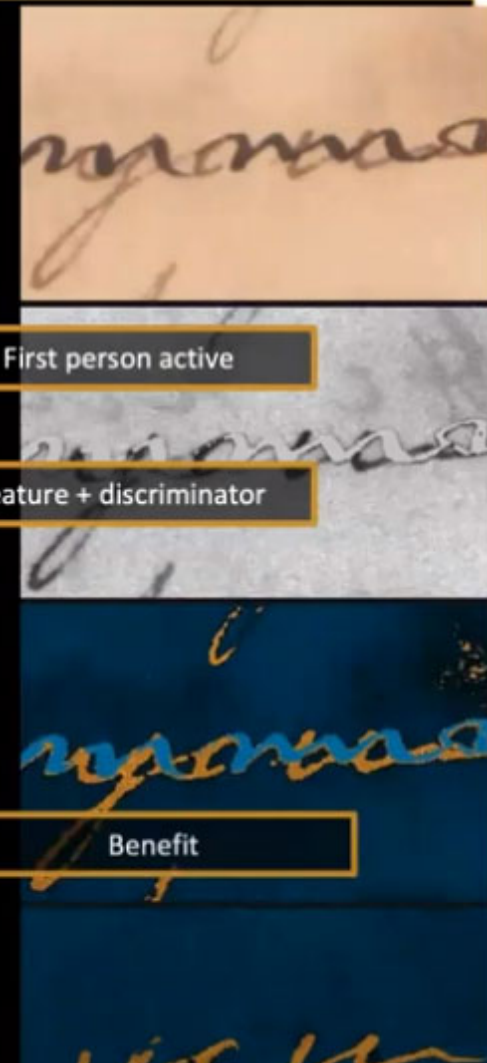
Lead with the benefit?

We will adapt ~~spectral imaging~~ techniques developed exclusively by our team in biology and medicine, that uses different wavelengths of light to capture the details of faded ink and deteriorated parchment, which will allow archaeologists and historians to decode important historical documents.

First person active

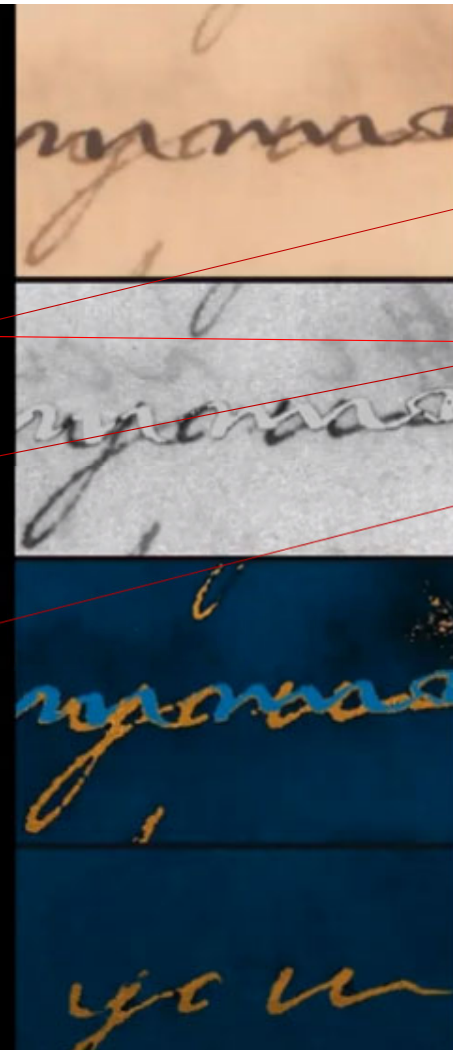
Feature + discriminator

Benefit



Lead with the benefit!!

We will expand access and use of important historical documents to archaeologists and historians by specially adapting our spectral imaging techniques developed by our interdisciplinary team of biologist and medical professionals.



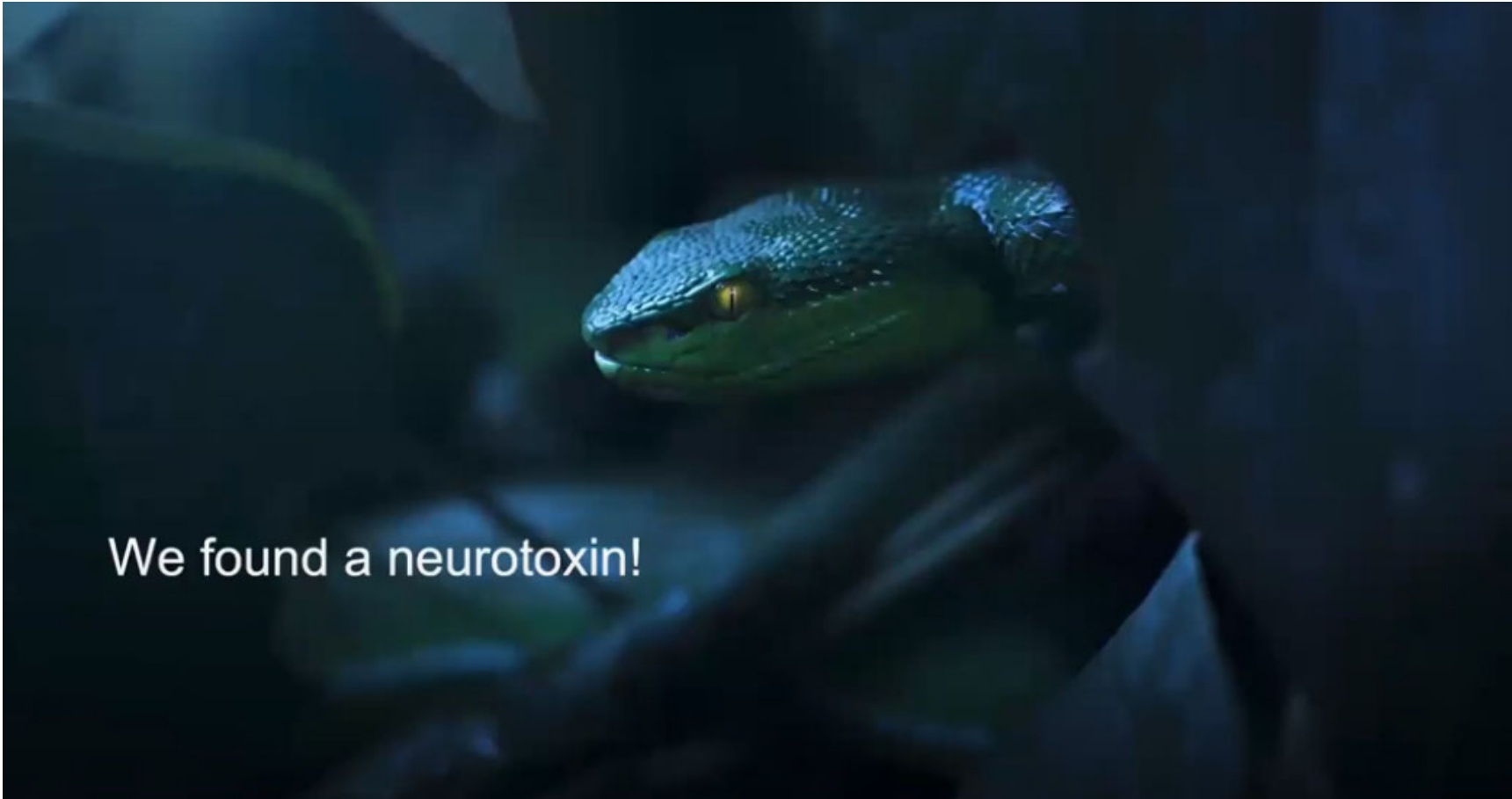
Benefit

First Person

Feature

We will adapt spectral imaging techniques developed by our team in biology and medicine, using different wavelengths of light to capture the details of faded ink and deteriorated parchment, which will allow archaeologists and historians to decode important historical documents.

We will expand access and use of important historical documents to archaeologists and historians by specially adapting our spectral imaging techniques developed by our interdisciplinary team of biologist and medical professionals.



We found a neurotoxin!

Key Concepts

Feature(s)	Drugs from chemicals synthesized from black mamba venom for treating Alzheimer's
Benefits	Drugs significantly more effective and less expensive than what is on the market. Symptomatic relief and increased quality of life and lifespan for people who suffer from Alzheimer's and reduce worldwide costs of treating Alzheimer's by 50%
Differentiator(s)	Three universities across three countries have preliminary research data; Dr. Ramirez has demonstrated success.

Basic Requirement

We will partner with Clodomio Picado Research Institute in Costa Rica, the Universidad Central del Caribe in Puerto Rico, and the University of Pretoria to study how synthesized neurotoxins in black mamba venom tightly bind to nerve cells.

First person active

Feature



Better

We will partner with Clodomio Picado Research Institute in Costa Rica, the Universidad Central del Caribe in Puerto Rico, and the University of Pretoria to study how synthesized neurotoxins in black mamba venom work and how they could be used to treat people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease.

First person active

Feature

Benefit



Better Still

We will partner with Clodomio Picado Research Institute in Costa Rica, the Universidad Central del Caribe in Puerto Rico, and the University of Pretoria to study how synthesized neurotoxins in black mamba venom work and how they could be used to treat the 29.8 million people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and significantly lower the cost of treatment in the developed countries worldwide from \$150 billion to \$80 billion. Co-PI Ramirez has already discovered that black mamba neurotoxins bind tightly to nerve cells, making them very effective at destroying nerve cells and causing neurogenic shock in snake bite victims.

First person active

Feature

Benefit

Differentiator

Better Still

In order to decrease the cost and increase effectiveness of treatment in developed countries for Alzheimer's disease my group will study how synthesized neurotoxins in black mamba venom work and how they could be used to treat the 29.8 million people who suffer from Alzheimer's disease and significantly lower the cost of treatment in the developed countries worldwide from \$150 billion to \$80 billion. Co-PI Ramirez has already discovered that black mamba neurotoxins bind tightly to nerve cells, making them very effective at destroying nerve cells and causing neurogenic shock in snake bite victims.

Benefit

First person active

Feature

Differentiator

Lead with the Benefit

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Benefits are scalable

- What is benefit to the field?
- What is the benefit to society?
- What is the benefit to the funder?
- What is the benefit of my technical approach?

