

White Papers and Preproposals

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What's the Difference?

WHITE PAPERS HAVE BEEN USED MORE FREQUENTLY IN THE SCIENCES AND IN TECHNICAL CONTRACTING, BUT THEY ARE INCREASINGLY BEING USED IN ALL FIELDS.

IN MANY AREAS, THE TERMS ARE OFTEN USED INTERCHANGEABLY, INCORRECTLY.

Compare

- Both are written prior to formal proposal presentation
- Both are used to introduce a novel concept or solution to a problem for consideration by a program officer or select group

Contrast

White Paper	Preproposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variety of audiences • Not usually formally solicited • Markets the concept • Informative • Focused on the research question • Like getting a phone number 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sent to program officers • Requested by agency • Describes the research plan • Competitive • More about plan to get at the answer • Like going on a first date

Content

White Paper	Preproposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Can be used to "float" a research concept ○ Informs sponsor of the direction and strengths of the researcher's work and facilitates discussion of collaboration ○ Generally offered by researcher in an initial conversation far in advance of a competition ○ Ask a colleague to read and then describe the important concepts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Standardized part of competition ○ A tool designed for the program officer, but important to communication of researcher's capabilities ○ Requires that the large majority of project planning, costing and planning have already been completed ○ Ask a colleague to read and then describe the project

Tone

White Paper	Preproposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Begins a conversation about the research content. ○ Most content is about the intellectual and disciplinary setting and pertinence of the project. ○ Methodology does not require a lot of detail unless the project is about technique. ○ The tone is professional, but less stuffy than a formal proposal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Guidelines, guidelines, guidelines ○ Consider the information needed for selection process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> × Meets sponsor priorities? × Competence of researcher × Capacity of the institution × Effectiveness of the method × Bang for the buck × Quality of management evidenced by project design

Review and Evaluation

- **White Paper**
 - Might be shared with other staff, board members, or others, but this is primarily a peer-to-peer communication and will be judged mostly by the recipient
 - If well presented the white paper concept will be shaped and changed in subsequent conversation
- **Preproposal**
 - Evaluation may be by agency staff or by field readers
 - Review emphasis will be on identifying high potential projects for full submission—the fewer final submissions, the easier and faster the review will take place
 - Standard procedure complete with score sheets similar to full review

Sequence

- 1 • Concept
- 2 • Sponsor Contact
- 3 • White Paper
- 4 • Preproposal
- 5 • Competitive Proposal

Example

- One example of recommended white paper content:
- http://www.nwcg.gov/teams/pmo/products/documents/White_Paper_Guidelines.pdf

**Contact the Program Officer
Before Writing Anything**

- develop contacts
- establish your credibility
- assess agency interest
- answer technical questions
- demonstrate common ground, pique interest
- deadlines?
- review process?
- list of funded projects?
- special requirements?
- project approach/suggestions?

Preproposals

**PREPARING THE
RESPONSE TO A
REQUEST FOR
PREPROPOSALS**

**Sponsors want to
Change the World**

AND THEY WANT TO DO IT THEIR WAY.
AT THIS POINT FOCUS IS ABSOLUTELY ON THE
SPONSOR'S CHOICES, PRIORITIES AND
PREFERENCES.

Why Agencies Request Preproposals

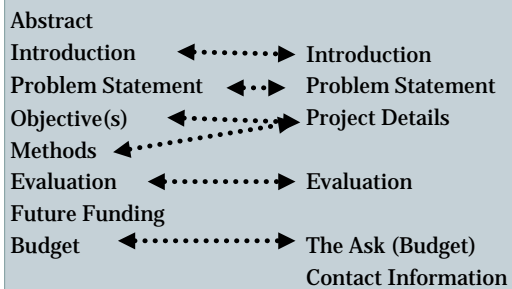
- Used by the program officer
- Helps cull the herd before the competition
- Is the project worth putting resources into a review?
- Helps plan for types and numbers of readers/reviewers
- Definitely competitive
- Different from full proposals in intent and length

Do your Homework

Just as you would for a full proposal

- Guidelines
- Annual Reports
- Web Searches
- History of support
- Be very sure of the project's pertinence and any "cool" factors

Full Proposals ↔ Preproposals



Introduction

- The introduction ties the research idea to the priorities of the sponsor emphasizing those aspects that makes this a cutting edge and effective study— it's all about curb appeal
- All “hooks” must be easily found and understood.
- Any literature cited should be limited to the most applicable to the foundation of the premise and the design of the project.
- This section must be short and concise. The introduction is validation, not the concept that is for sale.

Problem Statement

- The problem statement must mesh absolutely with the current priorities and evidence the innovative thinking that supports this application.
- At the preproposal level, the sponsor has decided on the goals of this particular competition and will not be open to diverging opinion.
- The sponsor will be receptive to innovation that shows a reasonable chance of producing results.

Evaluation

- “How will the researcher assure the sponsor that findings will be relevant and valid?”
- Methods of proof, how data will be collected and treated, short and to the point.
- If the project justifies some type of innovation, it can often be included here.

The Ask

- Preproposals must include a good budget estimate. The sponsor realizes that in developing a final budget, there may be variance, but a “BAIT AND SWITCH” WILL BE EASILY SPOTTED. No round numbers, no “PFA’s.”

Where do you hide the hooks?

- No one is buying yesterday’s technique.
- No one is buying confirmation of what is known.
- No one is filling “holes in the literature.”
- Basic research is rare; research and development is much more attractive.

Project Title

- The project title is the researcher’s first chance to make an impression.
- Titles must be active and descriptive, telling the whole story in one statement.
- No acronyms or buzzwords.

Abstract

- The abstract is a re-telling of the whole project.
- Emphasize the innovations and be sensitive to the “broader impacts” or mission-related priorities of the sponsor.
- Remember that the abstract is not an introduction.

Methodology

- Innovation, innovation, innovation—newest technique based on the newest results.
- Partners, collaborators, subagreements to meet the requirements of the design.

Budget

- Believable costing based on market prices and institutional policy.
- Lean and accurate, no ballpark numbers.

So--



- Start early by anticipating the next year's priorities and competition
- Talk to the program officer– call early and often
- Use the White Paper to communicate your plans and to allow the Program Officer input, put that person on your team
- Remember that everything you do is a representation of you as a professional
