

Tips for a Successful JFSP Proposal

March 3, 2009

Objectives

- Ensure that your objectives directly address the task statement. Identify the specific question(s) within the task statement that each objective addresses.
- Limit your objectives to just those that respond to the task statement. The Governing Board does not want to see additional objectives that are tangentially related or contribute to some other task statement.

Background and justification

- Keep it short (approximately one page or less). Limit background material to just that necessary to understand the objectives.

Methods

- Ensure that your methods are well described. Inadequate description of methods is the single biggest reason proposals fail. It is okay to just reference a standard approach if applicable, but otherwise provide sufficient detail that reviewers can evaluate the validity of what will be done.
- Tie your methods to the specific objectives they are intended to address

Project duration and timeline

- Be realistic. Don't overpromise.

Project compliance

- Think this through. Will this project need NEPA, OMB survey, animal take, or other permits or clearances? If so, who will do them? If the responsible party is not a principal investigator, include evidence, such as in a letter of support, that indicates that the party is committed to this work. Don't raise doubts by being careless here.

Budget

- Reviewers like in-kind contributions
- Do not pad your budget in anticipation that JFSP will reduce it; reviewers usually detect and dislike padded budgets
- Make sure the budget is well organized and clearly presented. Use supporting notes to clarify your budget submission.

Research linkages

- Another important section that is often overlooked. Reviewers want to see how the proposed work relates to other ongoing and proposed work.

Science delivery

- Provide deliverables that are appropriate to the task statement and the state of the science; i.e., if the science is not yet mature enough to warrant a fully developed product for land managers don't promise such a product.
- Have land managers help determine which forms and formats of interactions will be of most use to them.
- Include both active and passive deliverables
- Be careful with software systems. Is it responding directly to a clear need, or will it just add to the clutter? Is it intended for scientists or is it for field applications? Is it really ready for prime time?
- Managers often like straightforward guidebooks.

Support letters

- Support letters are useful if they show understanding of the proposed work and the author articulates how the work will benefit them.
- Do not send support letters that appear to be “ghost-written” by the PI.
- Do not send “form support letters” where only the signatories name has been changed.

Administrative requirements

- Review your proposal carefully. JFSP administrative requirements are musts. If in doubt, contact us.
- Double check the number of pages in your proposal to make sure it does not exceed the maximum number allowed.