Grant Writing for Success

Session Transcript: 2022-2023 Grants Conference

Megan Columbus: All right. Thank you for joining today's presentation on Grant Writing for Success. My name is Megan Columbus. I'm the Communications Director in NIH's Office of Extramural Research, and I'll serve as your moderator for this session. I'm so pleased to introduce you today to a woman that has had more than 20 years of experience winning grants both as a PI and advising applicants as a program official here at NIH. She's currently serving as Associate Director of Research Training and Career Development at the National Institute of Mental Health. Please welcome Anita Bechtholt. Anita, before you start, I'd like to introduce also to our audience to Dr. Ashley Smith. She's a program official also at the Mental Health Institute who will be helping answer questions in the chat and will be coming on camera for later in the session. Thank you so much. I hope you all enjoy the presentation. We look forward to addressing your questions.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Great. Thanks, Megan. So I'll just start by saying I think that we want to leave as much time at the end of questions. We know you have a lot of individual questions that you'd like to ask, so I won't go through the slides really exhaustively. A lot of them contain information that you can use as a resource later, and those slides are already there for you to take a look at, so I'll just sort of breeze through them and then be ready for lots of questions at the end, so save your questions as you go or enter them in the chat, and we'll be prepared to answer them.

So this is just a brief overview of the topics I'm going to cover. I won't read through those. Keep you surprised as we're going through, but basically I'm going to go through some tips in terms of how to write a successful application. The most important tip I would give you is to start early. It's just thinking in terms of when you need the funding to come active. Think about our process, just the NIH part of it. From the time that you submit until the time that we're able to tell you that your grant is going to be awarded can be up to 9 months or a year. So I'm giving you this little visual representation there of the gestation of a child, and I do that not just because of the similar time frame but because I know for many people their ideas and putting this grant together is kind of like their baby, so think about that process starting way back when you start planning and probably the planning up to the point that you submit could also be another 9-month-long process, so just start as early as you can imagine as possible.

Sorry. Switching the slides there. Sorry. Just making sure I'm on the right slide because I clicked ahead too far there. So the first step in that process really is to find a home for your work. At NIH, you've probably already heard in other sessions that we have 27 different institutes and centers, and we all have different missions covering different topics, so it's important to make sure that your grant is targeted towards the interests or priority areas of an institute, and you can do that. You can figure out where your grant might belong through a number of resources that we have available online and not least by talking to program officials like myself at the various institutes. So the tools that we have available, for example, are the Matchmaker tool in the NIH RePORTER. NIH RePORTER is a search engine that's available online, and there's a link at the bottom of this page for how to get to this Matchmaker tool, and it basically has a list of all the grants that we've funded. I forget how many years it goes back now, but quite a few and especially including all of our currently funded grants. You can, of course, go through the websites of various institutes that you think are related to your work, looking at strategic plans and portfolio areas and research priorities that are published there on the websites, and then also you can go to the NIH Guide, which is another online resource that shows all the funding opportunity announcements or all the solicitations for grants that we have that can also be based on subject matter. All of these are online resources you can mine, but of course don't forget your mentors are probably your strongest resource. If you're doing work that's similar to what you've been trained in, your mentors probably know who the program officers are as well.

Oh, I'm sorry. I'm having trouble with these slides here. Okay. So this is just a visual screenshot of the Matchmaker NIH RePORTER tool, so you would just click here at Matchmaker to get to that particular tool, but you can also see that various other information is available here through NIH RePORTER, so you can put in key words. You can put in your own abstract or specific aims, and then it'll bring up grants that are related and provide you with lots of information, including the program officer that is associated with a particular grant, so that can give you a hint of which program officer to reach out to.

And here this is just another screenshot showing here that you can through this Matchmaker tool look for similar program officials, so it might be that your topic area like, for example, with my portfolio at NIMH, some of the work that is covered in our portfolio might also be covered or tangentially covered through the NICHD, and so you can find program officers from multiple different institutes and perhaps reach out to all of them to find out how they might prioritize your work. I've already alluded to this idea, but one important part of writing a successful grant application is contacting your program officer and contacting them early. I promise that's all of the cheesy animation that I'll use in this presentation, but I just wanted to emphasize how important it is to talk to program staff. You want to send them your specific aims. You want to get feedback from them about how those aims would be prioritized at the institute, especially if they might refer you out to another institute. I'm showing all these other names at the bottom here. It's just because you might be hearing different names for the same job. Program officer can also be called program director or program official or acronyms like PO and PD, and that really just varies by institute, and it's just a historical, cultural kind of indicators, so certain institutes just use different names, but we're all the same person, so if you hear any of those names, it's all referring to the same person that you need to contact about your grant idea. The kinds of things that you want to talk to them about is, as I was suggesting, tell them your idea, provide them with a specific aims page if you can. You want to ask them about how your work fits with the priorities of the institute, and you might also want to talk about the grant type that you're considering, so it could be that you have a project that has .. . is high risk but high reward and really compact project, so in that case, you might submit an R21, or maybe you have this big idea that's your first big career grant, and so that might be an RO1 as an early stage investigator. Obviously you may also be interested in some career development awards, and depending on what stage you're at in your career, different awards might be more appropriate for you, and so program officers can talk with you about that.

Identifying that grant type that you're going to apply for is a very important aspect of writing a good grant. You want to make sure you're picking one that's appropriate for you and your work. And I'm showing this slide that is mostly focused on earlier-stage investigators and trainees, but you can see without me going through each one that there are many different grant types that might be appropriate for your particular career stage, and then important thing to learn about these grant types is that not every institute or center supports all of the grant types. So for example, you may decide that an R36 dissertation grant is the best grant for where you're at in your career and your needs, but then it turns out that the institute that's associated with your work doesn't support the R36, so then you'll have to start thinking creatively and talking with program staff to determine what other grant type might be better for you or might be available to you with that institute or center.

I alluded to this idea of being an early stage investigator, so I just wanted to quickly provide this as a resource to define it for you. I bet you're hearing about it in other sessions, but basically the idea is that if you're early in your career, that is within 10 years of your terminal degree or the end of your training, then you have this designation and have not already received an NIH .. . a large NIH grant, such as an RO1. Then you have this designation of early stage investigator, which means that you'll get some preference in funding, so we do prefer to fund early stage investigators over more seasoned investigators, so that gives you an advantage, and then also their review together and review and various other ways that they're accommodated and as well extensions for that 10-year period are available, and there's a website here that I'm providing you a link for to read more about that. The place where you're going to go to find out about the grant types and the announcements associated with them is this Grants & Funding site of NIH where you can go in, and you can get all kinds of information, the program announcements, the instructions, some tips for how to write applications. You can see there's various tutorials. There's all kinds of information packed into this website. It's basically everything you ever needed to know about a grant, so you definitely want to spend some time going through this website, and in particular, you might go to the Guide, for example. The Guide shows you specifically how to .. . specifically the Funding Opportunity Announcements, and there are various kinds of these that you may have heard, such as the RFA, which is a Request for Applications. PAs, they're most commonly Program Announcements, but we also have PARs and PASs, which stand for review and special set-asides, and then of course all these activity codes that you might have heard of before like RO1, RO3, R15 as well as all the training mechanisms. So there are different funding announcements for each different type of grant as well some other notices from different institutes about their special priority areas, so you want to just dig through this and find what's appropriate for you, and again, speaking with your program officer can help you sort of hone down this information.

Once you do find the program announcement that you're going to apply through for the type of grant that you're going to apply for, you want to read every single bit of that. It has lots of important information, including, as I was saying, which institutes support it. So for this, I'd just have an arbitrary program announcement here, but you can see, for this announcement, there are only a handful of institutes and centers that support it, but also, it's going to provide you the purpose of the announcement, the review criteria and especially what would be a responsive application for this announcement.

You also want to read the instructions. It's so important to make sure that you have every relevant element of the application included and that you're providing the right information in that section. It's always nice to have example applications to follow, but be aware that sometimes when you're following an example application, there may have been changes since that application came through, so you definitely want to make sure that you're following along for each little bit of the grant. There's a description of instructions that you should be following along to.

I highly recommend that you listen to a mock study section. Study section is an experience that can really change your perspective about grant writing. This, of course, is just a mock study section, and there's also one available during this regional seminar that you can watch various program officers in actor roles as reviewers to try and recreate this experience for you as well, and you'll be able to ask questions then. But any event, you should watch some kind of mock study section so you can get a sense of how the applications are really handled and what kind of conversations that the reviewers have. It's really kind of a career-changing experience to go through that. But, of course, what they're talking about really is the review criteria, and you want to know what those are so you can write your application to be responsive to those criteria, right? So I'm just showing you here some common review criteria from different announcements, and I've added in this one in green, career development plan, which is just another review criteria element that's added in training career development awards. So you just want to keep a lookout for that information in the program announcement so that the reviewers have all that information to speak to.

Now I'm going to get into really some tips about writing the grant, the actual writing process of the grant, what to include and what not to include and some benefit or some attributes of better and worse applications through the next few slides. So the first thing is something that you might not naturally think about, and that is that the reviewers are doing a service for us and for you really and the taxpayers to look at these applications and then give us their opinion about the quality of the research and all of those review criteria that are relevant to the application, and you can imagine if you just even think about your own situation, how busy you are, what your workday looks like and then adding on this monumental task of reviewing 10 full grants. Imagine writing your grant but then having 10 more to review on top of that, on top of your regular work schedule just as a service. And I won't do my one-woman show of a reviewer's day in the life of a reviewer, but the idea is that these people, they're working all day. Let's say they have meetings. Let's say they're serving on committees. Let's say they're writing a review for a journal article. They're meeting with their graduate students. They're meeting with their research assistants and postdocs. They have a full day of work. Who knows what time that ends? Maybe they go home. They pick up their kids. They try to get something to eat. Maybe they put their kids to bed, and then maybe that's when they have time to finally just sit down and look at this big stack of grants that they have to review and give you feedback on, and so you could imagine that they're really taxed, so you want to give them a break, so through doing things like leaving white space. So you can imagine their first page they turn to usually is the specific aims page. And in NIH grants, we have all these limitations about what size the margins should be, what size the font should be, how close the lines of text should be, and there's a temptation to sort of maximize that for yourself and get as much information on a single page as you possibly can because you want to get all this information to them. But imagine how overwhelming it is to turn to that first page and just see wall-to-wall text with no white space, and then they read the first line, and there's a typo, and they think, "Ugh, this is going to be rough." You don't want to start the reviewer out with this bad impression or the feeling that this is going to be overwhelming, so you want to make life easier for them. Give them some white space. Make sure you review it and see that there aren't any mistakes if at all possible. Have other people read it to help you find those mistakes. You can use things like bold and italics and underlines very judiciously. I've seen grants that seem to have random bold and underline italics to draw their attention to really key points. Course, you want to make sure that you're writing as clearly and concisely as possible. And also, finally, in terms of making life easy for the reviewers, you want to make sure that when you're writing, you're writing to the level of understanding of someone who is not a complete expert, someone who is a smart scientist, who works close to your field but certainly doesn't know as much about the work as you do but can understand if you just provide them with enough information. You don't want to make the assumption that they know too much and end up leaving out important details.

In terms of general advice, as I alluded to earlier, I would suggest that you study successful grant applications. There's really no better way, I think, than to see an example that was successful while, of course, making sure that you're writing unique information to you, not plagiarizing, I guess, is what I'm trying to say, but just using it as an example to guide your own original application. I would suggest that you really share drafts with anyone who's willing to read it, so this, of course, would be your mentors, but it might also be your colleagues, fellow graduate students, fellow early-stage investigators. Anyone who's willing to read it and give you feedback will have relevant things to say. If the most .. . If your average colleague can understand it, then probably the reviewers will understand it as well. You want to make sure that you're always providing a rationale for any methodological choices that you make. This comes up very often in review where you simply say what the population is that you're studying, but you don't say why you're choosing it, and then that becomes a problem. You definitely want to demonstrate feasibility of the project that you're proposing, and I'll just take a minute to elaborate on this idea, and that is that you want to consider both feasibility and plausibility if possible, so plausibility being the idea that your hypotheses are correct and feasibility being the idea that you can execute the work. So .. . And you can do a combination of these things, and we can talk about that if you have more questions later, but you definitely want to make sure that it's work you can do at the very minimum. You don't want to overlook statistics. The reviewers are always talking about whether power analyses were provided or not. You don't .. . There's temptation to leave out that part, but it's an important part. It doesn't have to be long, but it's still important to keep in your plan for analyses. I say keep up on publications because when you write a grant, it can feel all-consuming, but you don't want to let your publication slip during that long period that you're preparing this application. You want to make sure you keep those publications coming too, so don't make it a one-or-the-other choice, and always be both realistic. That kind of goes back to feasibility, and be explicit, meaning sometimes it's better just to say exactly what you mean and not go all the way around the barn to try to explain your idea. I guess it's better advice sometimes when I have a concrete example to share with you.

We're already running low on time because I want to provide lots of time for questions, so I'm just going to keep breezing through here. Better-scored applications, I've alluded to a lot of these ideas already, so I'll just go through quickly. They have clear significance. They provide an important problem, or they're investigating an important problem and are deemed to have high impact, and as well and quite closely related, they're novel and innovative. The application has a strong .. . applicant has a strong track record and provides a clear rationale. They .. . If there are .. . If possible, it provides supportive. That sort of goes back to the plausibility idea, supportive preliminary data and obviously relevant preliminary data, which often can be the feasibility part, so I know how to do this part. Here are data to show that, which is not necessarily a mini version of the study of proposing but related data. It's clear that the approach .. . I'm sorry. The comments are .. . The chat is blurring my screen. So it's important that there are relevant preliminary data .. . I said that .. . and that the approach is not too ambiguous. You want to make sure that it's clear exactly what you're doing and why, and of course it's applications that have careful attention to detail and don't have a lot of mistakes. And the converse is true. Applications that do less well are those that are deemed to have low impact. They're just descriptive projects or have an incremental contribution to the literature. They're too ambitious. There's too much you're suggesting to do. It's not possible you could actually do it in that period of time, or it's not focused. It's too meandering. There's too many unrelated aims, or even the aims are too interdependent. That's kind of a common mistake that science .. . We think about science as something that progresses in a direction. I find this. Therefore, I do this. Therefore, I do this. And it's a problem if you write your aims in that way because then if aim one doesn't work out the way you expected, then you wouldn't even do aim two if the two are linearly dependent like that, so you want to make sure that your aims are independent, that you would do each one regardless of the outcome of the others. You want to be clear about your hypotheses and rationales, as I said, and that's when you get into problems with poorly scored applications, that the hypotheses are unclear or that you lack appropriate expertise. They're going to be looking for these kind of flawed approaches where, for example, in poorly written applications, it's not that there are never any pitfalls, but you don't demonstrate that you know that, so you have to mention potential pitfalls and then alternative approaches, so if you're going to say, "Oh, I recognize that there may be this problem, and if there is, here's what I'm going to do." That's what they want to know. They don't want to think .. . They don't want you to just say, "This is a foolproof idea." They just want you to provide what directions you would go if there were problems and then, again, of course, question feasibility, too much, or it's not clear how you could possibly do it.

I'll just say a quick minute about revising and resubmitting. You always want to talk to a program officer after you receive your summary statement and have read the reviews and digested the information. Think of it really as an opportunity to improve the application, and it really is. In almost all cases, if you take the feedback and you change the application, as a consequence, you will get a better score. You will have an .. . Excuse me .. . An opportunity to write an introduction page, and you want to be really clear about what you've done to change and improve the application. You certainly can't .. . And it has a one-page limit. You can't list everything that you've changed, but you can certainly direct the reviewers to the sections and the applications that are changed to relative to whatever the concerns were. You should do your best to address all the criticisms thoroughly. Leave no stone unturned if possible. You don't necessarily have to do everything that they suggest, but if not, you want to be clear about your justification for the choices that you've made. And then, of course, always be constructive and respectful in your response. Being argumentative or taking a defensive response or stance is never beneficial in the resubmission process.

Finally, you should stay informed. All of the institutes and centers are active in various social media, and you can get lots of information that way, but there's also a Listserv that you can sign up for to receive information from the NIH about FOAs and changes in policies, et cetera. The "Open Mike" blog is also something that might be really interesting. That's written by the Deputy Director of Extramural Research, who writes about all kinds of different topics but especially things about training and career development. And then, of course, the COVID-19 guidance, you want to stay abreast of that. That is the end of the material that I had planned to present, and I'm happy to take questions now. I don't know, Megan.

Megan Columbus: Great. Thank you so much. Yeah, we certainly do have questions, quite a lot of them, and so try and get through them with some alacrity. Could we go ahead and bring Anita on .. . ugh .. .

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Ashley?

Megan Columbus: .. . onstage as well, please? Great.

Ashley Smith, Ph.D.: Hey.

Megan Columbus: So much. Okay. So should the writing feel scholarly, academic or a bit more conversational and engaging? What's your advice?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: That's a great question. It should most certainly be scholarly, but that doesn't mean it can't also be engaging at the same time, so I think that there's quite a skill associated with mastering engaging, scientific writing without sounding too casual or going towards being inaccurate, so you want to make sure that you maintain your scientific precision, but you can still engage people while writing in a scientific manner.

Megan Columbus: Great. Thank you, Anita.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Mm-hmm.

Megan Columbus: So folks had some questions about the timing of Funding Opportunity Announcements. We say, "Start early. It could take 9 months to write an application," and yet some Funding Opportunity Announcements are posted 60 days before the first deadline. What's your advice?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: That's a great question. Sometimes it's true. We do have these announcements that are posted quickly, and unfortunately people can only really take advantage of those if they're ready, if they're always ready, if they're always processing their ideas, and you can keep those on paper. Write things for yourselves. As you're .. . As you come through ideas, try to make those concrete if you can so that when an opportunity comes out that has a short timeline, you're ready to pounce, and those are the people who benefit from those kinds of announcements are the ones who have already been thinking about these ideas, and that's kind of the purpose of these solicitations too is to bring in people who are poised to respond. Many other announcements though, as I think the question sort of alluded .. . It said, "The first submission date." Often there are multiple submission dates, so if there is more than one submission date, I would make sure that you take ample time to be prepared and put in the best application that you possibly can.

Megan Columbus: Yeah, thanks, Anita. Good advice. We always get a question about, "So what happens? I've tried to contact a program official four times, and they haven't gotten back to me. What do you suggest? Do you have recommendations?"

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Yeah, keep trying until you find someone who will respond. All program officers are not created equally, and sometimes you have trouble getting ahold of someone. Pick someone else that seems as close to related as possible, and either they can help you, or they might be able to help get that other program officer to be responsive, and I really feel like it's important to get as much feedback from as many different people as possible, so if you can find another program officer who might also have comments, that's great in any case.

Megan Columbus: Right. There's a question about how to indicate ESI status in the grant application, and that's actually done automatically, right? So the PI just needs to make sure that their comments profile is updated with their degree or clinical residency information, and that information will get calculated. The system will calculate it and flag your application appropriately. Mm-hmm. So lots of people are looking for samples of successful grant applications. A lot of these samples that people see on the NIH website are outdated, and now we have new policies, and it doesn't take into account potentially sex as a biological variable or the new data sharing policies or all these kinds of things. What's your recommendation? Obviously it would be nice if we had more of [Indistinct]. It's not so easy to do, but what's your recommendation, Anita?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Right. At least what I did when I was an early-stage investigator is, I looked to my friends and colleagues. It's hard for them to do sometimes, but often you'll find people who want to help and want to help you learn and are happy about their success and want to share that, and so you can just ask around and see if anybody's willing. Don't be offended if they say no, but you'll likely find someone who will say yes.

Megan Columbus: Yeah, I agree. We got asked about proposal templates for formats and margin and font and size, et cetera, and certainly I know the application guide is absolutely where you need to go for that, and there you'll see specific links for formatting attachments and for bio sketches and for all those things.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Mm-hmm.

Megan Columbus: There's a lot of information out there, and unfortunately we care about the details, and those details are important because they're what help ensure a level playing field. And so I encourage you to go look, and I did answer in the Q and A with a link to the application guide.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Great.

Megan Columbus: Summary statements, so summary statement of previous submission mentioned not enough publications on the topic. As an ESI, what do you do about those kinds of things? Publications are in the works? How do you convince them that you're qualified?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Oh, I'm sorry. I think I was misunderstanding the question at first. Well, preliminary data is one way to convince them. As I was talking about feasibility throughout the talk, you want to demonstrate that you can do the work, and what better way? Of course, through a publication that's gone through peer review is great, but there's .. . You can approximate that in various ways by, for example, showing unpublished data that you've been able to collect or, of course, through collaborators. Perhaps you don't have a strong publication record in a certain area, but you do have a collaborator who does.

Megan Columbus: Right. For secondary-analysis grants, is preliminary work needed?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: That's a good question. Kind of depends on what it is. It's hard for me to answer that without knowing what it is. I think you'd have to talk with your program officer about that to get more specific feedback.

Megan Columbus: Okay. Fair enough. Some federal agencies indicate that grant parameters regarding page limits, single, double-spacing, et cetera, are recommended and not required. Which is true for NIH?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: It's required.

Megan Columbus: Yeah, for NIH, be very careful to follow. They're very clear that things are required.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: And so what the consequence would be if it's noted that you haven't met the requirements, your application will be returned, so it'll be as though you didn't submit it at all.

Megan Columbus: Yeah. How formulated should your idea be when you reach out to a program official? Should you have a very concrete idea with data and stats and plan and budget, or can it kind of be early in the process?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: So you should definitely reach out early. We don't want you to go too far down a path without getting our guidance because you may need to make changes. You need to be receptive to changes potentially, but you do want to have a formed idea. You don't want to just send a paragraph just roughly talking about the kinds of things you're thinking about. It's best if you can at least get to that stage of writing a full specific aims page and sending that out to a program officer but not being completely locked into that as the absolute idea at that time.

Megan Columbus: Yeah, and I think we probably want to clarify. So we're asked, "When reaching out to a PO, a program official, how do you best recommend balancing building a rapport against pestering unnecessarily for advice?" And so .. .

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Yeah.

Megan Columbus: .. . we're not looking for people to reach out multiple times here, right? That's not .. .

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Right, right, and a lot of the reaching out with program staff comes later, but if you have a reason to reach out, do, but, yeah, pestering, so let me take one step back. We know that you need to contact us and that you're being told to contact us and that you want to engage us, so we're aware of that. You don't have to think of it as pestering, but, yeah, you don't want to send me 10 emails in a week. You might reach out, talk about your idea, talk about your submission plan. If questions come up while you're preparing your application, don't hesitate to reach out again. If you submit and then you publish a new paper, don't hesitate to tell us about that. There are certain points that it's important to contact us. If you're going to a meeting and you want to know if we might be there, you can contact us then. And you can always ask the individual program officer what their preference is as well.

Megan Columbus: Right. This .. . I think this question is really along the lines of good grant writing. So is it advisable to include a photo in the research strategy primarily to add interest, even if the photo doesn't really convey crucial information about the research plan, a photo of the research team or a field site?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: That's an interesting question. I would say it's important to provide visuals to make the reading experience better for the reviewers but not things that are random that aren't relevant, so it could be a visual representation of a hypothesis. I wouldn't recommend things like pictures of the lab group or the field site unless it's relevant to what you're .. . For example .. . Let me give you an example. I used to work at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, and people might do research in a lab-bar setting. It would be normal to include a picture of what your lab-bar setting looks like, but you wouldn't just randomly include a picture of a bar because you're studying alcohol to make the document look more interesting.

Megan Columbus: Right. You'll notice in the chat that .. . Thank you for our event coordinator. They put the Matchmaker link into the chat to help you find the right program official to contact. You use that Matchmaker tool. Literally you can just throw in your abstract there, and it'll start matching you with institutes and program officials where your research might fit, and so that's where you can start contacting people. So we probably have time for one more question. What would be really good one? I'm sorry. Who's making the decision about budget changes on the award after it's awarded, right, because some institutes are making recommendations in awards and those kinds of things? Is it the grants-management specialist? Is it the program official?

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: I think I might not be fully understanding the question, so when budget changes occur after the award is made, it's the PI is making changes, and some changes require prior approval from the NIH. Changes that occur prior to award, such as trimming of the budget, just across-the-board reductions, those are made usually at an institute level, and it happens to every grant. They're not selected individually as a decision point. Did I get the question right there, Megan?

Megan Columbus: Yeah, I think so. I think so.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Okay. So if you're interested in finding out when you need to contact us after award for a budget change, you can refer to the grants policy statement and, in particular, the section labeled prior approvals, and that'll give you an idea of when you need to ask about budget changes.

Megan Columbus: Perfect. All right. I think we've actually hit the time for this session, so I want to thank you very much, Anita.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Sure.

Megan Columbus: I want to thank Ashley in the background and our sign-language interpreters and our audience. You've been great. Thank you.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Thank you. Bye-bye.

Megan Columbus: So as people are .. . Before you leave, just a reminder, if you could remember to let us know how the session went for you with the final survey, if you can fill out the survey for the entire conference when you're finished using the feedback form, and again, reach out to the program officials in our booths, to the scientific review officers. They can help with those questions that are uniquely yours, right, that you want to have that one-on-one contact with. Thank you so much. Appreciate you, and the presentation will .. . The video will be posted within 7 business days. All right. Thank you. Bye-bye.

Anita Bechtholt, Ph.D.: Bye.