Final Tips for a Competitive Proposal Q&A

This document should be viewed as a supplemental document to the NSF Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide. The following list of questions and answers relate to grants and innovation.

<u>The Q&A Presenters</u>:
Dr. Celeste Carter, the Lead Program Officer for Advanced Technological Education Program at the National Science Foundation.

Ann Beheler, the Principal Investigator (PI) at the National Convergence Technology Center at Collin College in Texas.

<u>Is it new to have the logic model at the beginning of the project description? If so, what narrative is needed to provide context for the logic model?</u>
Ann Beheler - I know I said that I put it at the first for my proposal, but Celeste how would you comment about this?

Dr. Celeste Carter - Well thank you Ann and welcome everybody today to the webinar. Hopefully, I'll be able to answer all your questions. I'm never quite sure until I hear them. I would say that the logic model is really a document that helps you prepare your evaluation and assessment plan. It very much depends on whether or not you want to include that in the body of the proposal. Since it's a one-page document that you could refer to and have in the supplementary documents with a clear explanation of your evaluation and assessment plan in the 15 pages. As Ann said, she does this initially; most people do not put it at the very front of their proposal.

Ann Beheler - If they don't put it at the front, I have been advised to at least refer to it. On our previous proposal, we put it actually at the end, it was page 15. Just to keep it kind of out of the way; however, we did refer to it significantly all the way through, because, actually, the logic model guides pretty much the organization of the entire evaluation process and assessment process. It was recommended by at least one of our reviewers along the way that it needed to be referred to throughout, because they were about ready to tell us we needed a logic model when in fact we had one.

Dr. Celeste Carter - That's a great point. So, I wouldn't argue with that, I would say that as you're discussing the "how" you will evaluate and assess the success, or not so much success of your project, you would refer to the logic model. It really is kind of a shorthand way of following each activity and how you will assess it and what you expect, questions, things that you expect to see. So definitely, you could refer to it throughout the evaluation and assessment portion of the project description and if you can include it in that 15 pages. Everyone always says well 15 pages sounds like a lot when you start writing, but then, when you get to the point where you have put everything down that you want, you find suddenly that you're over 15 pages, and you're trying to be more concise and cut some verbiage out of your project description. So that would be a case where if it fits great include it, if it doesn't I think you can make a case that it would be a one-page supplementary document.

<u>Can the equipment cost be incurred in a single year or must it be budgeted and incurred over each of the three years?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter – Okay, that's an easy one, especially if you're setting things up and you really need all that equipment at once, you need to request it all at once and you explain that. You say, "If we're going to actually go forward and do whatever the course content is, we've got to have the equipment."

What you'll end up with is a slightly skewed budget that isn't going to look exactly even each year, but that's something that I think that reviewers are pretty used to. And you want to just explain it. So, yes, you can front load your equipment.

Can the budget line for computer services be used for equipment purchases or is it for software subscriptions or consulting?

Ann Beheler -How about it? How about I talk about what we've done? Under Computer Services, we have, in fact, included subscriptions or anything that we had to have for software – subscriptions like Survey Monkey and Constant Contact -that sort of thing. However, also under supplies some of our computers and some of our devices at least at this point are less than $500. Less than $5,000, depending upon - its $5000 for NSF - the college rules too but less than $5000 can go under supplies. However, I would point out and this is very important that in general the computers that get purchased are specifically for purposes of achieving the grant goals. The computers or laptops that are used by staff. In general, it's better if those are funded out of the hard money budget and then, of course the college is going to get the indirect to then replace those funds. Do you agree Dr. Carter?

Dr. Celeste Carter – Yeah, I absolutely do. One thing you will find in a solicitation is that the program can't set up computer labs for you. If you said, "Well, our computers are old. We can't run X Y or Z, so you need to buy us 30 more computers and it'll be used by lots of students," that's not an allowable cost. Now, if it's something new and you're setting it up and you are actively using it for some of the students that are, maybe, doing something specific to your project goals and objectives and your staff, then, that is allowable. But, NSF figures that if you're going to have computer labs, that's a cost that your institution should be covering for you.

The PAPPG (Proposal and Award Policies and Procedures Guide) does not allow letters of support that are personalized, it use to allow for them, but not now. Do you think the SGA for ATE will allow for personal letters of collaboration?

Dr. Celeste Carter - Yes and this is a big change. Pretty much what they're saying in the PAPPG is that, what they want to see is a single, two sentences from any collaborator that says, "We agree; we're going to do what is listed in the project description," which would mean everything has to be detailed in the project description. Remember that a program solicitation trumps the PAPPG, and the ATE program will still allow pretty much just letters of commitment. So if it's an industry partner, the industry partner would say maybe something like, "I commit to support three students a year in internships in this company." A general letter of support has not been allowed for a long time, such as "Oh, I think so and so is a great person and this is a wonderful institution, the students are great and please support this project." Those letters can literally make your proposal be returned without review. So those general support letters, they're not allowed under any circumstances, but a substantive partnership where the partners are saying, "We are committing to do this," are still allowed with the ATE program.

Is there a short list of key items that could cause a proposal to be returned without review?

Dr. Celeste Carter -The easy ones are. I think everybody will think it's kind of funny, but submitting your proposal late. It used to be that there would be a window of time after the 5:00 p.m. deadline where you could still submit a proposal and it would be accepted at which point I would be looking at the time stamp saying that you know this came in really too late and it's going to be returned with that review. At this point, there is an automatic checker that's been put into place in the NSF system and your proposal won't be accepted at all. Other things would be if you think, "Well, 15 pages at the font size specified in the PAPPG is just not enough space. How about if I change my font size and make it smaller and I reduce my borders," those sorts of things can still get your proposal returned without review. Just not being responsive to the solicitation, one very interesting proposal came in by someone who wanted funds to restructure and design a new wet suit that was returned without review as it was not responsive to technician education programs, which is the mission and goal of the ATE program. So, use your common sense, read the PAPPG carefully, read the solicitation carefully, it's pretty self-explanatory.

What happens if they upload a PDF for the project description and it's got 20 pages? Do you let that go or not?
Dr. Celeste Carter - Oh no, that's something that will be returned without review. There have been restrictions and will continue to be restrictions on the number of supplementary documents you can submit as well. So if you think, "Well gee, I've only got 15 pages so I'll write my 15 pages and then, in supplementary documents I'll upload another 30 or 40." That can actually get your proposal returned without review as well.

Ann Beheler - I would like to caution folks, sometimes I will see on my side that I have 15 pages and then, once I upload it and my PDF is uploaded to the Fastlane system, it decides to run a few lines over onto the 16th page. So be sure when you have the opportunity to review what got uploaded, be sure to review that and make sure that it (FastLane) did not get creative with your work.

The attendees program is brand new and it involves electronic tablets that students can use in the new program, is this an allowable cost?
Dr. Celeste Carter –This sounds a little bit like a project where students are going to have to be, maybe, outside using tablets to gather data that are very specifically for this new program, if that's the case, yes. You write that up and you say, "This is not something that the institution supports this is something that is really very specific to what I am proposing to do." So, I think that the big thing to remember is that you can ask for things in a budget. The reviewers are cautioned not to look at your budget; they are cautioned to read your 15 page project description and rate your proposal based on the intellectual merit you have described and the broader impacts that you described. If something comes up in your budget and it reviews really well, let's just say every reviewer gives you an excellent, so then, a program officer is going to be looking at it very carefully, reading to see if they agree with that excellent rating and they're also going to scrutinize the budget very carefully. At that point in time they may have questions for you, but the thing to remember is that if you've submitted a proposal and you get questions from a program officer, realize that we are told not to send questions and start a dialogue with a prospective principal investigator unless we want to go forward and recommend your proposal for an award. So it's a really good thing if you get questions. Sometimes you may be told, you know, you asked for 40 laptops and we can't supply all of those, but are you willing to negotiate and compromise a little? Things like that can come up in a budget negotiation. So, you may ask but, you may not get what you ask for, but definitely ask.

Ann Beheler - I would like to make a comment with respect to the budget, maybe it's just for centers, but whether the reviewers are supposed to look at the budget or not, I have had some of our comments from our reviewers actually referring to the budget and things they like or don't like in the budget; or saying maybe there's not enough money there to pull off various different things; or we're trying to spend money for things that we shouldn't spend money on.

Dr. Celeste Carter – Yeah, so, that's an issue that we cover in the pre-reviewer webinars and also in instructions to reviewers. I will say, they pretty much always look at the budget and what I tell them is, you can make any comment you want about the budget as long as you qualify your statements by saying that this did not affect the way you rated the proposal. So, generally, I will tell people, you write something about intellectual merits' strengths and weaknesses, you write something about broader impact strengths and weaknesses and then, in the summary statement you could say, "Although, this didn't impact the way I rated this proposal, I don't think these people have asked for enough money to do all the activities that they've listed. And I really think this is a great proposal. You, the program officer, who reads this, should really look at this," that kind of thing is fine, because they're saying that they didn't change their rating because they thought there was a problem with your budget.

What do you recommend we do until the SGA comes out, should we just wait? Should we get started? If so, how? I'm concerned about wasting time.

Dr. Celeste Carter – Okay, so since one of the things we're always telling everybody is start early and you've got a project idea, I would basically use the structure that you see in the old solicitation to get started, but realize that when the new solicitation comes out, you're going to want to read it very carefully and make sure that you're still on track. I can tell you that I was in someone's office today asking them, please, please, could they please look over the program management plan and let me know if I can put it into final clearance. They said they would let me know by Monday. So, I'm hoping I'll be able to start submitting for final clearance through the agency on Monday. I can't really tell you how long that will take, sometimes they zip through and sometimes people have things like they've caught typos that I haven't caught, but it should come out soon. I would certainly start mapping out your ideas, there's those five questions that really help you get started. One is what's your need? Why are you going to write a proposal anyway? Then, number two is how are you going to meet that need? So what are the activities that you're proposing? Third is do you have the right set of people with the right expertise? So, that's building your team. Four is how are you going to know if you're successful? That's your evaluation and assessment of each activity that you're proposing. Then, the final one is how are you going to tell other people about it? Because, this is federal taxpayer money that would be supporting your project and nobody wants to see it just stay in one location. You want to be able to tell people about it. All of us want to have successes, but sometimes you've learned something really important where you thought a strategy would really work and maybe you found that with your particular group of students, then, that might be something else you want to point out to people. So, I would definitely say get started and then, hopefully the solicitation will be out soon.

For a single project, can it be done totally at a given college for all of the work? Is it better to have partners? Does it review better if you have partners? Does it vary for the new project to ATE versus the full projects for ATE?

Dr. Celeste Carter - You know, it really doesn't. Although, you always need some partners right, because you can't get away from the ATE program requiring that you have industry partners. But, as far as other educational institutions and trying to do something at several different institutions at the same time, you do not have to do that. A lot of times that's something that you've already gotten is some pilot data. You actually have people calling you saying, "Hey, what about if we write a proposal together and we try and disseminate this broadly. We adapt and implement it at our two other campuses or whatever." A full project can definitely be something that is located at your institution. You just want to tell other people what happens, let them know how it goes.

Does the ATE program anticipate offering the ATE Coordination Networks option in the new ATE Program?

Dr. Celeste Carter – Yes, that's an easy one.

<u>If a college has a Business Advisory Council is that good enough to document business involvement or does there have to be something more?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter –Okay, I'm going to speak from my experience of having had a business and advisory group at my campus for my biotechnology program, when I was a faculty in California, and they ended up having nothing to do with my ATE project. I needed an industry that would commit to whether it was working with me on developing curriculum, providing internships for students, coming and doing seminars on their company and pitching students, that, generally, was not something I would get from my advisory board. Most of the general advisory boards want to come to your campus once a year and you and your Dean checks off a box and say, "We had our advisory board meeting and we're done." So the ATE program really wants you to develop a partnership with industry and that's more than just having people show up once a year for good food and talk generally about your program and then, they leave.

<u>It was suggested that one of the ways to really learn how these things review is volunteer to be a reviewer. What are the qualifications for a reviewer?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter - Pretty broad really, if you think about your area of expertise and the ATE program. The ATE program can support high school teachers as reviewers, community college faculty, four-year faculty, industry, potentially, some grant writers if you have a grant writer that's very, very interested. There's a potential that we can use a grant writer, maybe even somebody that you've contacted either at an economic development agency or Workforce Investment Board or, even a trade association that's really interested in coming in and providing their input and expertise that's relevant to technician education. We can use any and all of the above. There's a couple of different ways you can let me know or let my division of undergraduate education know. There is a link on the Division of Undergraduate Education site that says, "Would you like to be a reviewer, click here." You can actually upload your resume or CV and say, "I'm interested in reviewing," and you can list the programs. Or, if you want to be a little more specific and you really want ATE to send me an email that just says, "I'm really interested in reviewing, I've attached my resume or CV to this email please, contact me and let me know." One thing to remember, I hold on to all of those emails from interested parties. The review panels, for the ATE programs are generally in the first week of December. We will start inviting people in September. So if you haven't heard from me by September, send me another email and say, "Not trying to bug you, just want to let you know, I sent you an email in April telling you I wanted to be a reviewer and I'm just reminding you of that." I'm fine with that, that's not something that I think, is a bad thing to do.

<u>For the faculty member that's on the review panel, do they need to know the discipline area?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter -You know it really depends. We need disciplinary expertise, but sometimes it depends on what the collective set of proposals is doing. I mean, probably the easiest answer for that on centers panels is we have centers all across these different areas supported by the ATE program so we never have a centers panel that has everybody with one disciplinary expertise. Maybe we need IT people; we need engineering; we need manufacturing; we need you name it, depending on the portfolio of proposals that are submitted. We have to look at that as well and then, think about who would be best suited to be on a particular panel.

<u>On a project panel, I wonder if it's more likely to have faculty that are closer to the discipline, if its discipline related?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter - It is; I mean, let's just say, I'll pick my field which was biotechnology. Generally biotechnology, if we don't have enough to form one entire panel, biotechnology and chemical technology end up getting put together. So if that's the case, the disciplinary people we would need on that particular panel really would be people for the discipline knowledge. We'd need either people who

have biology or cell biology degrees and chemists. So again, that's a good call Ann, that we do need discipline specific people as well.

<u>Do reviewers receive any kind of a stipend for participating as a reviewer?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter – Yes you do. Not that it's (stipend) going to cover to the number of hours that you're going to spend, because having been on both sides of this endeavor, I know that after having come to the National Science Foundation once as a program officer and then gone back to my institution. So I had like two years of experience reading proposals, even with that kind of experience a lot of proposals I'd be working on them for at least a couple of hours each and you're going to have 10 to 12 proposals to read. So that adds up, so what we do is provide you with a stipend. We, also, pay your travel to come to Washington for basically a day and a half of meeting with everybody else who read the same set of proposals that you did. Each one is discussed in turn with one panelist named as the scribe to write up what the discussion was about, not reiterating what individual reviewers said, as those reviews have already been submitted, but captures the big topics that came up during the meeting that everyone talked about. So, yes, there is some pay, it's just not a lot.

Ann Beheler - If I'm not mistaken, you pay for our airfare, but the hotel, we need to take out of the stipend correct? Pretty sure that is the case and a food cost. So it's not a full ride in terms of travel.

Dr. Celeste Carter – That's correct.

<u>One of the details which we find the hardest to gauge is the "right" amount of time to allocate to the PI versus distributing project related work among multiple senior personnel. Do reviewers typically favor more centralized versus distributed allocation of project work?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter - It depends on what the activities are. Let's just say that your principal investigator is the person that is the go-to person for the disciplinary content, but you also need somebody that's going to be your liaison and partner with industry. It really depends on the project. Ann, you can probably respond to this one too.

Ann Beheler –Sure, from having lead grants for a long, long time, I'll say this, I think the PI needs to know enough about the discipline to handle it. Perhaps be a faculty member directly in the discipline, maybe not. I started as a Dean, but I was also teaching. The other thing I would say is that in terms of actually executing the project, it's important that that person have the, I'll call it the "senior decision-making" role for the project, because oftentimes this sort of thing can get very bogged down with, let's just call it "bureaucracy" that we have within a college. I would say that that person should not hesitate to use college facilities, not like rooms or anything, but college programs, college departments, accounting people, PR people that sort of thing, use them rather than trying to do that sort of work on their own. I think it comes down to explanation; you have to explain it and explain it well. Whatever you want to do you need to explain it well.

Dr. Celeste Carter - I agree. For whoever asked that question was that an adequate answer? Because, I mean it, isn't really one or the other, it really depends on what your activities are.

<u>What constitutes a conflict of interest for a reviewer? If I submit my proposal this year, can I be a reviewer?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter - We've got a little bit of leverage in the ATE programs, because there are three tracks in the program and I actually have the lawyers at NSF help me write the management plan. For instance, there are the three tracks; centers, projects and targeted research on technician education. Let's say you

submit a project, but you have expertise in doing research projects similar to what would come into targeted research on technician education, you could ask to be a reviewer on that track. You cannot review on the project track. So you're not going to be able to review in the track for which you actually submitted a proposal. The other things would be, let's say that a colleague of yours from your institution submitted a project proposal, you still couldn't review for the project track, because your institution is in that pool. There's a few others, if you have a family member that is at an institution, let's say you're invited to review and you open up your packet of proposals and you go, "Oh look at that, it's X University and my son/daughter started there this year," you have an automatic conflict of interest with that proposal, regardless of where it's being submitted from in the university. Ultimately, there's one that's kind of what we call the "stomach test," if for some reason you just feel uncomfortable, maybe you know the person. You may not have collaborated with them, but you know them well enough that you feel like you can't be objective in reviewing a proposal; you can actually talk to a program officer about things like that. Some of the definite ones are same institution; your advisor for your graduate work, you have a lifetime conflict of interest with any student that has gone through your program that is now submitting a project in the program, you have a lifetime conflict of interest with someone. That is something we go over when we do the pre-panel webinars for everybody. So that you'll know and you can let the program officer running your panel know that you have a conflict of interest. One of the reasons we try and have a diversity of people on a panel and hopefully more than one person with a specific expertise is just for that reason, if someone you know looks and says, "Well, you know, I can review the other nine or ten proposals, but I can't review this one," there will be enough reviews coming in that we can move forward.

What if the reviewers do not agree on their ratings or on the strengths and the weaknesses?

Dr. Celeste Carter - That's when you guys make it a whole lot more work for us as program officers. We do not ask that you reach consensus. I know I have sitting in front of me a proposal that came in to another program and it has two excellence and two fairs and I have to write a review analysis that explains what our rationale was for either going forward or not going forward with that proposal. It makes the job kind of exciting on my end and I have to read very, very carefully and then make my own set of decisions about how I would rate the proposal if I were just a standalone reviewer. I incorporate all of that into my review analysis and comments to the prospective PI.

You said that the ratings range from poor to fair to good to very good to excellent are there guidelines for what each of those means?

Dr. Celeste Carter –Well, you know, people do that a little bit differently as well. Sometimes you'll read a proposal and the writers are really slick, you know, it's like boy everybody on that panel just thinks this is amazing, just absolutely amazing. Then, one reviewer says, "Well I didn't actually see any definitive understanding from them of how they were going to assess student learning, did you guys see that?" So, things like that start coming out, that's one of the reasons everybody comes here and we discuss them together, that gives people an opportunity to discuss. You can change your ratings, I mean, maybe you say, "Then I got snowed by somebody who is really a slick writer and I agree with you now; I actually don't see that they covered some points very adequately." So we ask that if you're going to change your rating, you also rewrite your review, but that's perfectly fine to do. For the most part, what you're doing is you're looking at the criteria for intellectual merit and broader impact that are written, both, in the PAPPG and the solicitation, because ATE adds some extra things. What is the potential for this project to establish strong industry partnerships and to really highly educate highly qualified students that industry is going to want to hire? That's specific to ATE. Broad intellectual merit - is this going to advance the STEM learning environment for students – that's the kind of thing you're going to find in the PAPPG. So as a reviewer, you sit down and you look at all those (criteria), I know some people will actually develop their own rubric. They'll pull those (criteria) out and they'll put them in a spreadsheet and they sit there checking off boxes as they read proposals. The big thing is that nobody writes a perfect proposal. Even a proposal where the preponderance of reviewers give it excellence, a lot of times they'll say, "We think this was a really neat idea, but you know it could be strengthened if they did a, b, c, and d." So they gave it an excellent rating, but there are still things that could be fixed that would make it even better. You put together the best proposal that you can, nothing is going to be perfect, but you do try and be responsive to those criteria that are listed on intellectual merit and broader impacts.

Can a university be the lead for an NSF ATE grant? Are there any special considerations if they are allowed to be lead?
Dr. Celeste Carter - So they are allowed to be lead, but the requirement and the solicitation says that community college faculty has to have significant leadership roles on the project. So what I would expect to see may be the PI would be from a four-year college, but the Co-PIs would be from one or more community colleges. The impact of the project needs to be on the students who are on the community college campus, not that there can't be a pathway to the four-year, but a transfer programs is not something that the ATE program is looking for. We're looking for students who are highly skilled and qualified for the jobs that require more than a high school degree and less than a four-year degree as defined by industry. So yes, a four-year institution can be the lead fiscal agent, but you got to have community college faculty in there.

What about overloads for faculty who normally carry them? I understood that faculty could not carry overloads and work on the grants, is there something new that allows them to continue overloads?
Dr. Celeste Carter – Yes, there is. This has been a real sticking point for a while. I went up to the policy people and talked with them about that. What you will see now in the solicitation that I hope is going to be coming up soon is that as long as your institution has a written policy that says an overload is okay and it applies across the boards, not just to you, because you're in line to get a federal award, but across the boards, then you can keep your overload. You might ask for a slight reduction in the courses you're teaching and keep your full overload, but you might say, "Okay, so I want to drop one course because I'm going to be working on the project to do that," but you don't have to drop your overload as long as your institution has a policy that says it's okay. I know one of the rotators currently working on ATE is from Harold Washington College of the City Colleges of Chicago. They have a written policy that says any faculty member can teach up to six units a year of overload for whatever reason so that would be the kind of thing you want to make sure your institution has a written policy about. Then its fine, NSF isn't going to say, "Oh no, can't do your overload."

Should you specify your institutions overload policy in the proposal or the budget justification?
Dr. Celeste Carter - I think it'd be great if you put it in the budget justification.

My college has an indirect rate, but they're willing to forego that rate in order for us to have more funds to accomplish our work is this acceptable? If not, why not?
Dr. Celeste Carter –Okay, so it used to be acceptable kind of across the boards and then, the powers that be at the National Science Foundation decided that was a form of in-kind support. On the budget form, itself, your institution has to use the fully negotiated indirect rate. Let's say it's 50 percent, all right, it's going to be down there and it's going to be 50 percent, but it's 50 percent of something, it could be of wages only or it could be of total direct cost however they negotiated it, you have to ask for it. What your institution does with those funds is between you and the institution. So if you go in ahead of time and say you got a claim, but it doesn't mean that you guys keep it all, whether you turn this back that's between you and the administrators at your institution. But, you can't say, "Okay our indirect rate is 50

percent, but we're only going to ask for 10 percent, because we want more money going towards this project," they've got to take it and then, give it back to you.

What if your college has an indirect rate for off-campus and an indirect rate for on-campus, can we just use the off-campus rate which is lower?
Dr. Celeste Carter – So, Ann, you might be able to respond to that, but I would say it's going to depend on where your activities occur. If everything you're doing is on campus, your institution might come down on you and say, "Oh no, no, this is on campus. If you're holding workshops or whatever at off-site locations, then you can use the off campus." Ann, what would you say?

Ann Beheler – Well, we're a national center and almost everything we do is outwardly facing so we have justified using the off-campus rate for everything we're doing. What I find is that when it gets to the division of grants and awards as long as you've used one of the rates that's on your letter and as long as you've explained what you're doing that it goes through, there's not a problem. I've also seen times when we have submitted a proposal that part of it is charged at the on campus rate, because part of it was actually done on campus and then, the other part has been charged at the off-campus rate, which is a lesser rate and that works out fine too. The accountant gets a little messy if you're going to have two rates involved, in fact, it gets very messy, but it is really important to go ahead and claim one of those rates that is actually on your letter. If you don't have a letter you'll recall, you can take the 10% de Minimis rate, but then, I highly recommend you go after getting an indirect rate once you have an award.

You said that we needed to know what other colleges or consortiums were doing work in the proposed area that's funded by National Science Foundation. I understand how to find the abstract and how to find the name of the PI. I can probably figure out how to email them, but what if we email them and they do not respond? How are we going to find out what they are doing if they don't respond to us?
Dr. Celeste Carter – Right, so if they don't respond you can actually say that you are aware that there are other awards in the same area and that, "If this proposal reviews well, we have tried to connect with some of these people already. We feel that if the award goes through, they will be more willing to contact us and work with us." So it's more than you get to the reference page and there's only one word on it and that word is "none," you want your reviewers to know that you've looked at the portfolio, you realize there are other things there and that if it's at all possible you've read the abstract. Let's just say, you read an abstract, and it's basically your project idea, you would very much like to know. At that point, I'm trying to think whether or not it puts the phone number for the person, definitely has their email. When you go to the abstract their email is there and what you might try is being persistent. Another possibility is sometimes that system is not as up to date as far as we, the program officers, know. Let's say somebody's out on maternity leave or somebody has moved to a different institution and there's a different principal investigator that's put in there and the system hasn't been updated, you could always email me and/or any other program officer and say, "Look I've been trying to contact these people and I'm not getting anywhere do I have the right name and email address for this person." As far as their email contact information, we can definitely look that up for you and let you know.

In terms of the contacts with others that might be in our area, where would we put that in the proposal? Where does that belong?
Dr. Celeste Carter –Well, it kind of depends. You can say that you are aware of these things. Now is there something that they would provide you? If they would provide you with something so you didn't have to reinvent the wheel you'd put that in there. You'd say, "We've actually talked with so-and-so

they have an introductory IT course that covers the networking that we want to do and they're going to share that with us. We're going to see if we can adapt it at our institution so we don't have to do all this from scratch." That would be under your activities that these people would be willing to work with you and share.

<u>Fifteen pages is not much, do you have ideas on how to show goals, objectives, activities, responsibilities and timeline in a compact manner?</u>
Dr. Celeste Carter - I think that's hard. That's where if you can have somebody, I don't know, maybe you need somebody who's really good at editing, because a lot of times, although we don't think we've been too wordy and we haven't really repeated ourselves, we have. I know probably one of the hardest ones to write is a 15-page center proposal and people do it, so it is possible to do. Timelines are in there; goals and objectives are in there. One of the best things you could do is give your draft of a proposal to someone that you haven't been talking to about this project at all, along, maybe, with somebody in your English department that teaches writing. And say to the English person, "Would you edit this? Would you just look at this as far as content and take out extraneous words and things like that." And to the person that you give it to for reading the content you could say, "Do you really understand; did I make my case; did I tell the story really well; what the need is; what we're going to do to meet that need; why we have the people we have; how we know we're going to be successful and how we're going to tell other people about it." Those five things go a long way towards helping you craft a really competitive proposal.

Ann Beheler - I will say that we have a manner for showing goals, activities, objectives, responsibilities and timelines all in a table and if anybody wants to contact me, I can show you how that works. It's kind of a balancing act, because making the "what's in the columns" be similar in length so that you don't waste a lot of space is important, but it does tend to help. It makes you be able to get an awful lot of information in a very short space.

<u>Is it appropriate to prepare the logic model in a landscape format or should it be a portrait?</u>
Ann Beheler -We don't care, do we?

Dr. Celeste Carter - No and what I've seen of most logic models, including the one that I have to include in the program management plan for the ATE program, landscape generally works way better.

<u>Final Comments</u>
Ann Beheler - I absolutely would not wait until then to start my grant. I've said before that you can't start it early enough, because best laid plans end up, sometimes, not turning out very well because things get in the way, things happen. Also, I would remind people that it's a good idea to try to have your grant proposal completed at least a month ahead of time so that you can get various people to act as mock panelists and review it and give you honest feedback. Then, you have time to actually work with that feedback. If you have them review it the day before and then they say, "Oh my gosh, you missed the mark." Well, you're going to be crestfallen for one thing and secondly, there's not enough time for you to possibly manage to get involved in fixing your proposal to meet their concerns. Anything else from your point of view, Celeste?

Dr. Celeste Carter - With that in mind, I receive a lot of phone calls on the deadline day and a lot of times it is from people who started that morning uploading documents and they've run into some kind of a glitch. Another reason there was a proposal that was returned without review this past year, because they waited until the last minute and they thought that they had copied and were uploading their proposal description, their 15 pages and what they uploaded was the one-page project summary twice.

Ann Beheler –Yeah, I always try to load everything at least a week ahead of time. You can always unload and reload if you're still editing things, but it's very important to get some of the things done. Plus, there are things that you can get done well in advance. If you know who the PIs and Co-PIs are you can get the biosketches done and get them up there. You could work on this over time.

Upcoming Webinars

- May 18th - Creating Dashboards for Grant Development and Management
- June 15th - Using Prior Learning Assessments for Recruitment and Retention of Special Adult Populations

HI-TEC conference July 17th - 20th in Salt Lake City, Utah, this is going to have a lot of sessions put on by people who have grants and others. I've learned a lot at these types of sessions.

DOL and NSF workforce convening July 21st. The work we are doing in the CCTA project originally was to provide technical assistance only to the Department of Labor grants; however, we are providing assistance to NSF people and people who don't have grants at all before this session. Though on Friday the 21st, to get the maximum benefit out of this session, you should review any of the sessions that you did not actively attend. You should make sure that you already have your good idea and a draft of a proposal pretty well put together, because that's going to be your opportunity to get really good solid feedback from the program officers and other PIs who have done this over and over again.