OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL ADVANCEMENT
PROPOSAL WRITING GUIDE

The Office of Institutional Advancement (OIA) has developed this template to provide guidance for faculty members and staff who wish to prepare a fund raising proposal for their programs. The following categories represent the general subsections that are frequently necessary components of proposals that can be submitted to institutional funders such as foundations and corporations. Please realize that not every project will lend itself to this exact format. Requests to governmental agencies will require a completely different structure. Institutional grant making organizations should be solicited according to the practices of their field, so we recommend that you discuss your project with the OIA before you spend a significant amount of time writing an initial draft. The OIA will be pleased to assist you throughout the fund raising process by helping to edit proposals and gather the supplementary documentation required by specific funders.

Proposal Structure

An initial draft of a proposal that conforms to these guidelines will facilitate the OIA's ability to help you attract funding for your project. Please keep in mind that grant officers may not be familiar with discipline-specific jargon and must read hundreds of proposals, so it is highly advisable to use language that will be widely understood and easy to read. Generally, a proposal should not include more than five or six pages of narrative.

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Introductory Paragraph

This is where you will insert a brief introductory paragraph that succinctly summarizes the substance of your project, but it should not be attempted until your ideas have been thoroughly developed and organized in the body of the proposal as suggested below. This paragraph will convey a synthesis of the program's most significant elements.

Need for the Project

Compose a narrative that will help potential funders understand the problem that your program will address as well as the University's and/or community's need for it. If properly written, this section will not only produce evidence about the need for the project but also impress upon the reader that you thoroughly understand the subject matter. The information can come from authorities in the field as well as from your own experience, and it can include such basic concepts as discussing the historical under-representation of the students who will benefit from the program in a particular field of interest. This is a good place to insert demographics, statistics and other factual information.

Organizational Description

This section should describe your school or department. You should emphasize any past (or present) projects or activities that have been undertaken by you or the department and that are related (in any way possible) to the need for the project or issues as described in the previous section. Any unique information you can convey about the unit that is sponsoring the project will be very helpful. In the final version of the proposal, the OIA will also include information in this section about the University and the Brooklyn Campus, along with other relevant activities that will confirm the institution's qualifications to sponsor your program.

The Project Description

This section of your proposal should describe the goal(s) of the project and then discuss your objectives and what methods will be used to achieve the goals and objectives. The easiest way to accomplish this analysis is to create a basic outline and then transform it into narrative form. If the project doesn't lend itself to this structure, then you should describe your program as thoroughly as possible. Then discuss the personnel (staffing/administration) who will be involved, and how the project will be evaluated. The objectives and methods will dictate staffing and administrative requirements as well as budgetary considerations.

Begin with a few sentences that summarize the goals of the project, and be sure to understand the difference between goals and objectives. Goals are broad and conceptual, such as: "*Reducing youth violence by providing academic assistance to children from disadvantaged communities.*" Objectives are the measurable outcomes of the program, and are preferably tangible, quantifiable, and achievable in a specified time period (although sometimes it is hard to quantify an objective such as "*achieving improvements in understanding or behavior*"). Often, several objectives will address a single goal. An example of a viable objective for the goal of reducing youth violence is "*to operate an after-school program that assists fifty children in improving their reading scores by one grade level as demonstrated on standardized reading tests administered after six months.*"

You should also describe the activities you will undertake to achieve your objectives. In the above example, you would talk about the kinds of assignments that will be made and whether tutoring will be involved. Be sure to describe any special methodologies that will be employed, such as the use of *phonics* to help improve reading scores. You should also explain why these activities will achieve the expected outcomes, especially if they are new or unorthodox, by listing examples of theories, similar projects or even expert testimony. References to studies can be inserted, but do not use footnotes. Explaining and justifying your methods will enable the reader to visualize the implementation of the project and emphasize your qualifications to implement this type of program.

Faculty and staff

After the goals and objectives have been written down (or the program has been thoroughly presented) you should describe the various faculty and staff positions that will be necessary to operate the project and which ones are full-time or part-time. Identify which positions will be taken by current employees and which ones must specifically be filled for the project. Include a *few sentences* about key faculty or staff members who will be involved in the project, their qualifications, and their specific assignments. The CV's of individual staff members can be

included in an appendix if necessary, depending on the length of this information and whether a funder permits the submission of additional materials. It might be necessary to explain how current faculty members or staff will manage their ongoing obligations in addition to the tasks associated with the project. Also describe your plans for administering the project (who or what department will be responsible for personnel issues, finances, etc.), especially if the program is a large operation or if you are collaborating with outside organizations. Incidentally, "staffing" may refer to volunteers or consultants as well as to paid staff, and mentioning the participation of volunteers can help indicate the true value, as well as the cost-effectiveness, of the program.

Evaluation

By including a description of an evaluation plan in your proposal, you will indicate that you intend to monitor the program and its activities. An evaluation can either measure the project's final outcome or analyze the process used to get there, and the method that you choose will depend on the nature of the project and your objectives. You can describe how information will be collected, how the data will be analyzed, and possibly to whom and how the results will be reported. Also indicate if an outside evaluator will be involved.

Budget

To prepare a budget you will need to analyze your narrative and make a list of all personnel (such as release time) and non-personnel items related to the operation of the project. Be sure to think about not only new costs that will be incurred at the beginning of the project but also its ongoing expenses. The OIA will assist you in developing the budget, but you should be prepared to inform us about any expenses that are unique to the field or to programs that are similar to the one you are implementing.

Additional requests:

When you submit a draft of a proposal to the OIA, please do not insert any specialized formatting features (heading alignments, tabs, margins, etc) into your document. Do not use footnotes. Use single spacing unless otherwise requested. The OIA's preferred style/font/size is Normal/Times New Roman/12.