

Contacting a Program Officer

Why Talk to a Program Officer:

- To confirm that your application fits the program
 - To assess the level of enthusiasm about your research and discuss potential topics
 - To ask about funding opportunities
 - To help you decide which grant type or program is appropriate for you
 - To seek advice on preparing an application
 - To ask about compliance issues
 - To ask about investigator-initiated research:
 - ◊ Topics of interest
 - ◊ New scientific directions
 - ◊ Existing and new priorities that do not yet have published funding opportunities
 - To find out if there are any relevant programs in another part of the agency
 - To find out about requesting assignment to a specific review panel or agency program
 - After your proposal has been reviewed:
 - ◊ To answer any questions about the review or summary
 - ◊ To get insights into the discussion of your application at the peer review meeting
 - ◊ If you did not receive a fundable score, to figure out how much to revise before resubmitting
 - ◊ If the funding decision on your application is deferred until later in the fiscal year, to stay in touch and check on its status
 - ◊ To clarify the agency codes on your review
- If reviewers seem to disagree, to find out which was the stronger feeling in the room

Best Practices for Contacting a Program Officer

- Be courteous and professional at all times.
- e-mail to make an appointment at your mutual convenience.
- Know the role of program officers at that particular agency. Do not ask them to go where they cannot go.
- Be concrete and specific.
- Develop a concept paper and send it to the program officer before the meeting.
- Be on time and be prepared.
- Have someone else listen in on the conversation and take notes
- After you meet in person or by phone or correspond by e-mail, send an e-mail thank-you to the program officer with an indication of the next steps you plan to take.

Sample Questions for the Program Officer

- Do you feel this concept paper is appropriate for the funding opportunity?
- Do you have alternate recommendations for data sources?
- How much preliminary data do I need?
- Do you have recommendations for refining my aims / objectives?
- Do you have a recommendation about an appropriate review panel or agency program for my application?
- What areas are you interested in funding?
- Should I contact you again before submitting my application?
- Do you have any other recommendations?