



Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences  
University of Colorado **Boulder**

---

## Session slides

### **Developing a pitch**

- Talk it out with someone else; if you can't articulate the idea, it will be confusing to others!
- Anne shared some of her successful NSF proposals; she is willing to share these in-person but not electronically
- Figure out the challenge/problem to connect your idea with reviewer
- Identify what is novel, innovative, thoughtful (3 or 5 things), write it on a piece of paper
- Think about why it matters and how it would advance the field
- If you have an idea, and you don't know what solicitation to find, talk with your group and your team lead! RIO has support people, see information below.
  - [Jim Mazzouccolo](#): Proposal writer, editor and research development strategist
  - [Donna Axel](#): Proposal writer and editor
  - [RIO newsletter](#)
- Keyword searches help to get to the area that you are addressing (example: solicitation search – put in keywords, like [NASA NSPIRES](#))
- **CIRES Proposals team can help!** It can take time. As soon as you know the solicitation, contact the team to get into the system. They can help manage deadlines.
  - Start by [watching this video](#) to learn about the CIRES Proposal Tool.
  - If you have just discovered a solicitation and wish to discuss with a CIRES proposal analyst, go ahead and submit your idea in the proposal tool.
  - You can [watch this video](#) for detailed information on the university requirements about the proposal submission request (PSR).
  - Contact [ciresproposals@colorado.edu](mailto:ciresproposals@colorado.edu) if you have questions about this process or need help with any type of solicitation or gift..
- Foundation money can have different solicitations, CIRES has received foundation funding recently. Check with CIRES Proposals to discuss!
- Anne highly recommends that you meet with a Program Officer – develop a 1 page pitch and/or attend a webinar, you can schedule times (15-20 minutes to ask questions). Come with specific questions! Especially for a renewal – focus on review notes. Check out the [CEEE/PSECCO webinar](#) on how to prepare one pager.



Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences  
University of Colorado **Boulder**

---

## **Effective Proposals**

- Anne recommends that you focus more on the timeline and budget up front. Don't leave this part until later, while being too focused on the ideas. Helps to set up the research team as well.
- Foundations are very focused on mission, so make sure that your ideas are connected to their mission.
- Methodology needs to be appropriate – make sure that you are answering their question with established methodology

## **Proposal Structure**

- First, print out solicitation and mark it up. (RFP/NOFO)
- Stick with the structure in the solicitation! Start with a blank document, write out the headlines that are required (number exactly the way they want), highlight key language that they use, don't copy full sentences but make sure to reference their ideas
- Make key statements to guide the structure of your idea – you could use sticky notes to develop the logic of the proposal and order the ideas.
- Perhaps offer to be a reviewer to learn about the backside of proposal writing! Being on a panel is the best – requires a lot of time, but you can hear the discussion about proposals and rationale for funding or not.
- Sometimes, proposal writers spend a lot of time justifying their research without giving their research idea up front. The overview can help focus the reader on your idea - synthesis and short pitch of what you want to do and who will be doing the work. Feel free to highlight your team's awards and skills in this first section (save humility for later in the proposal). Reviewer can return to overview when buried in the details. (also might be required as an abstract) Remember to cite language from the call!

## **Goals and Research q's**

- SMART goals = smart, measurable, attainable, relevant, time-based
- Use verbs to make sure that your goals are measurable:  
<https://www.usgs.gov/human-capital/measurable-performance-verbs-writing-objectives>
- For example: say "increase" rather than "increasing"
- Make sure that your goal can happen within a certain period of time, so that it is achievable within the scope of the proposal and funding.
- Reviewer might ask for a plan B, in case things don't work out.



Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences  
University of Colorado **Boulder**

---

- If you think that the reviewer might have a question, address it clearly in your proposal. Example: here is my contingency plan...

### **Logic model**

- Sometimes logic models are required in the proposal. Helps you see gaps in your work, and make sure to include everything in the proposal.
- Helps to define short, medium and long term goals, and will clarify your approach in case the logic of your idea is complex
- See examples in slides. Might be a nice graphic to add to your proposal to map out your ideas.

### **Tell your story**

- Don't be too dry – storytelling helps to draw in the reader. Show why it matters with your story. You can use vignettes from your prior work. Show how you have effectively used funding before.
- If you are new to proposals, talk with your team (Co-Is) and show that you are productive scientists through your work. Use NOAA and your unit as examples of effectiveness. Perhaps tell a story about a weather emergency and how your work/research supported people.
- Think about why they are asking you to demonstrate prior work. Use it as an opportunity! Don't just create a table with accomplishments.

### **Graphics and Maps:**

- Don't skip the graphics and maps because you are keeping the proposal to a certain length. It is a critical way to engage the reader/reviewer.
- Comms team has a graphic designer – reach out for support.
- Use the map to help orient people to your area. Annotate to describe the work.

### **Timeline:**

- Work on this during your writing. It helps you check the budget and process. Bring your logic model to this process.
- Here are some example templates for timelines: [Gantt Charts](#)
- One comment about figures - if you can create one that summarizes your project that's really helpful. e.g. I've done ones including our methods and icons of aircraft/sites/satellites etc (Aleya)



---

Cooperative Institute for Research in Environmental Sciences  
University of Colorado **Boulder**

### **Random Thoughts:**

- Make sure to reference the letters of commitment in your proposal, don't just put them in the appendix!
- Be confident in your writing, avoid "I may do this..." Don't distract the reader with additional "maybe" ideas.