



**ARKANSAS STATE**  
UNIVERSITY

**Research and Technology Transfer**

# **Grant Writing Workshop 2025**

## **Day 1**



**/ArkansasState**

# Building the Framework of Your Proposal: Pitching An Idea to Potential Collaborators, Program Officers & Agencies

Research and Technology Transfer

[research@astate.edu](mailto:research@astate.edu)



# Meet Your Presenters



**Dr. Travis Marsico**

Vice Provost for Research,  
Innovation, and Discovery

Executive Director of the  
Arkansas Biosciences Institute

Professor of Botany



**Molly Alexander-Steele, MPA**

Executive Director for  
Research Development



**Dr. Robert Shields**

Assistant Professor of  
Microbiology



# Pitching Your Idea

- Identify collaborators and funding agencies that align with your project goals
- Have a clearly stated and well-defined research objective
- Create your concept paper
- Network



*/ArkansasState*

# Pitching Your Idea

## Tips

- Create a story: Understand the true relevance of your research from a holistic perspective. Keep it simple and avoid excessive technical terminology to attract appropriate interdisciplinary collaborators.
- Know your audience: Understand who you are targeting. Communications with program officers and agencies will likely require different communication than with colleagues and collaborators.
- Be precise and clear: In the beginning, precise and clear communication is key. Convey the quality and importance of your research objective compellingly without being overly wordy.
- Practice your pitch: Being confident is key. Practicing before a pitch with trusted colleagues or other professionals can help you refine your pitch and be more impactful. Also be open to new ideas and angles to the project. Potential collaborators and program officers may have feedback as you develop your proposal.

# Pitching Your Idea

## Concept Paper

Essential to building collaborations is to have a well-defined research topic / creative endeavor. A concept paper is an introduction to your proposed project.

- Approximately one page
- Write to your audience: model after targeted funding agency abstracts (for different audiences, you may have more than one)
- Include: Significance, specific research aims, proposed methods, timeline, and deliverables



# Pitching Your Idea

## Concept Paper General Format:

- Title
- Introduction outlining the problem / gap in knowledge
- Significance
- Specific research aims
- Methodology
- Timeline
- Deliverables



**Questions?**



***/ArkansasState***





# Pitching Game

## Instructions:

- Each person gets a scoring sheet with names and numbers
- Say your name and number
- Pitch your idea in 2-3 minutes.
- Others listen and score using the rubric
- After all pitches, scores are collected and shared



*/ArkansasState*



# Building a Relationship with your funding program and program Officers

**Dr. Robert Shields**

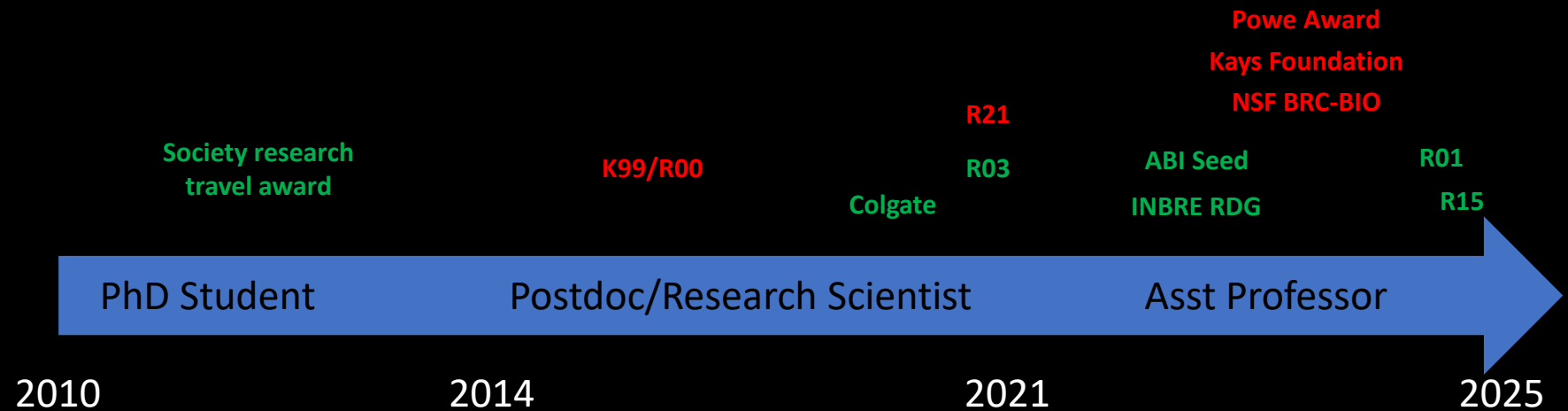
Assistant Professor of Microbiology

[rshields@AState.edu](mailto:rshields@AState.edu)



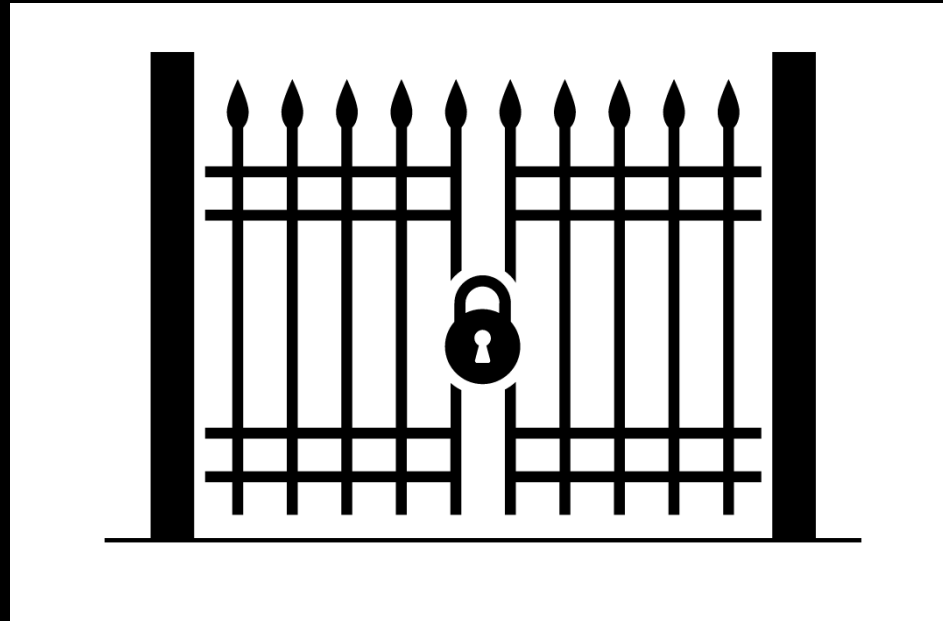
**/ArkansasState**

# A short introduction about myself and my experience with research funding



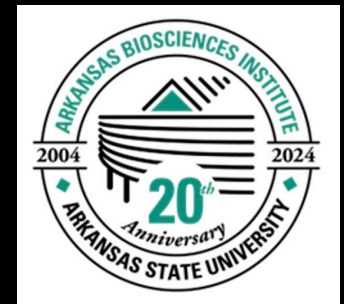
# IS THIS IMPORTANT?

A strong relationship with funding programs and program officers is crucial for securing research funding



# UNDERSTANDING FUNDING PROGRAMS

- Types of science research funding (government, private, institutional)
- Key funding agencies and their missions
- How funding priorities align with your research goals – short and long-term





# FROM LITTLE ACORNS...





# PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND ALIGNMENT

- Understanding what funding agencies prioritize
- Tailoring research proposals to fit program goals
- How program officers can provide insights



*/ArkansasState*



# ROLE OF PROGRAM OFFICERS

- Responsible for managing funding programs
- They help evaluate proposals and guide applicants
- Building a relationship with them matters

Tamara McNealy, Ph.D.



**Director**

Oral Microbiota & Bacterial Disease Program  
Oral Opportunistic Pathogens & Viral Disease Program

NIH/NIDCR

Democracy One, Room 614  
6701 Democracy Blvd., MSC 4878  
Bethesda, MD 20892-4878  
United States

(202) 430-1474

[tamara.mcnealy@nih.gov](mailto:tamara.mcnealy@nih.gov)

<https://www.nidcr.nih.gov/grants-funding/grant-programs/staff-contacts/tamara-mcnealy-phd>



# LAYERS TO A GRANT FUNDING AGENCY

1. President of the USA
2. Secretary of Health and Human Services
3. NIH Director
4. IC Director
5. Division Director
6. Branch Chief
7. Program Officer



*/ArkansasState*



National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial  
Research



***/ArkansasState***

# PO ROLE IN SCIENTIFIC INITIATIVES

1. PO recognizes an institute priority and develops a funding initiative
2. Reviewed at the institute level
3. Review at a council meeting
4. Announced to the research community

## Notice of Special Interest (NOSI): NIDCR Support for Research on Understanding Phage Biology in the Oral Cavity

Notice Number:  
NOT-DE-24-014

### Key Dates

Release Date:	June 13, 2024
First Available Due Date:	October 05, 2024
Expiration Date:	January 08, 2028

# BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH PROGRAM OFFICERS

## 1) Initial communication

- When do I reach out?
- How do I reach out?
- Pre-submission consultations
- Tailoring proposal to align with funder priorities
- Present your research strategically
- Show genuine interest and that you have done your homework



# EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES

Initial communication is going to be via email, phone call, and potentially

- Craft compelling messages
  - Active listening – understand feedback and adapt to it
  - Be polite – these people are often very busy
  - Formal tone
  - Know your boundaries – they are guarded with some of what they can
  - Send thank-you notes after significant meetings
- 
- What worked for your colleagues?
  - Use platforms like LinkedIn to share your successes



*/ArkansasState*

# BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH PROGRAM OFFICERS

## 2) After the proposal is reviewed

- Reach out to the officer for help with understanding the reviewer comments
- They can also guide you for what to do next
- They might give you an indication as to the likelihood of funding, but they are not likely to tell you with certainty
- Learn from rejection



# BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH PROGRAM OFFICERS

## 3) Nurturing long-term relationships

- Building relationships takes time (years) – be consistent
- Regular updates: let them know about grant successes
- Acknowledge the support and show gratitude
- Adhere to grant requirements and progress reports
- Attend events where officers are present
- Invitations to grant review panels

# CASE STUDY – INBRE FUNDING

- 1) Attended a Zoom workshop related to INBRE RDG awards
- 2) Communicated grant ideas with INBRE staff
- 3) Attended the annual INBRE meeting to meet folks
- 4) Shared successes with Dr. Ware
- 5) Had the opportunity to present the labs work at an INBRE meeting
- 6) Used core resources available via INBRE

This took place over several years



**QUESTIONS?**



***/ArkansasState***



# NETWORKING BINGO

## Instructions:

- Walk around the room and talk to others
- Ask the questions in the boxes
- If someone answers “Yes”, write their name in that box
- One person can only be used **once per card** to encourage wider interaction
- First person to get 5 in row (horizontal, vertical or diagonal) calls “Bingo”!



*/ArkansasState*



## Contact Research and Technology Transfer

- Email: [research@astate.edu](mailto:research@astate.edu)
- Phone: 870-972-2694
- Location: 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Dean B. Ellis Library, Suite 613
- Website: [www.astate.edu/info/research](http://www.astate.edu/info/research)



*/ArkansasState*