Lecture Notes for Life Science Grant Proposals

A guide for isolated, frustrated, and confused life science academics.

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Summary Outline

- Common Errors
- Story Telling
- Writing
- Some Proposal Pieces

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What Are Some Common Grant Proposal Errors?

- Errors of Detail
  - Easy to Fix

- Errors of Writing or Content
  - Not Easy to Fix

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Why are most detail errors in grant proposals easy fixes?

Answer: They are not part of the story.

Solution: Paying attention to the details pays off.

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Examples of Detail Errors

- Mission & Research Mismatch
- Formatting
  - Fonts, Margins
  - Length, Word Count

Did you research the funding program?

Did you read the guidelines?

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More Examples of Detail Errors

- Mechanics
  - Typos
  - Spelling
  - Grammar
- Budget Math
- Omissions

Did you forget something?

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Avoiding Common Detail Errors

- Read the grant guidelines.
  - Read them again.
  - Repeat *ad infinitum.*
- Edit your proposal.
- Proofread your proposal.

Did you call or email the program officer?

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Always Call the Program Officer!

- Name Recognition
- Project Recognition
- Ask Questions

Questions! What to ask the program officer?

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Questions for the Program Officer

- Specifics of Award Program
- Application Issues
- Unique Situations

More research never hurts.

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Need More Information?

- Search Databases.
  - Federal
  - Foundation
- Read Reports.
- Read Grant Guidelines **Again!**

Are you ready to tell your research story?

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Why are writing or content errors harder to fix in science research grant proposals?

Answer: Scientists do not tell great research stories.

Solution: Learn from the wider nonprofit community how to tell great stories.

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Three Nonprofit Story Lessons for Scientists

- Tell stories showing how your research overcomes some challenge.
- Tell stories that show your creative solutions to research questions.
- Tell stories connecting your research to a bigger picture.

Why are these types of stories important in science grant proposals?

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Science Storytelling: A Big Hint

- Great research proposals have elements of all three types of stories.

How can I improve my writing skills?

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Fixing Storytelling and Writing Errors

- Keep your writing
  - Clear
  - Crisp
  - Concise
- Simplify your writing
  - Simpler Words
  - Shorter Phrases
  - Shorter Sentences

How do I start writing a grant proposal?

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Beginning Your Research Story

- Review the pertinent papers.
- Develop your hypothesis.
- Outline your ideas.
- Draft a proposal summary.
- Draft the budget.

Why draft the budget so soon?

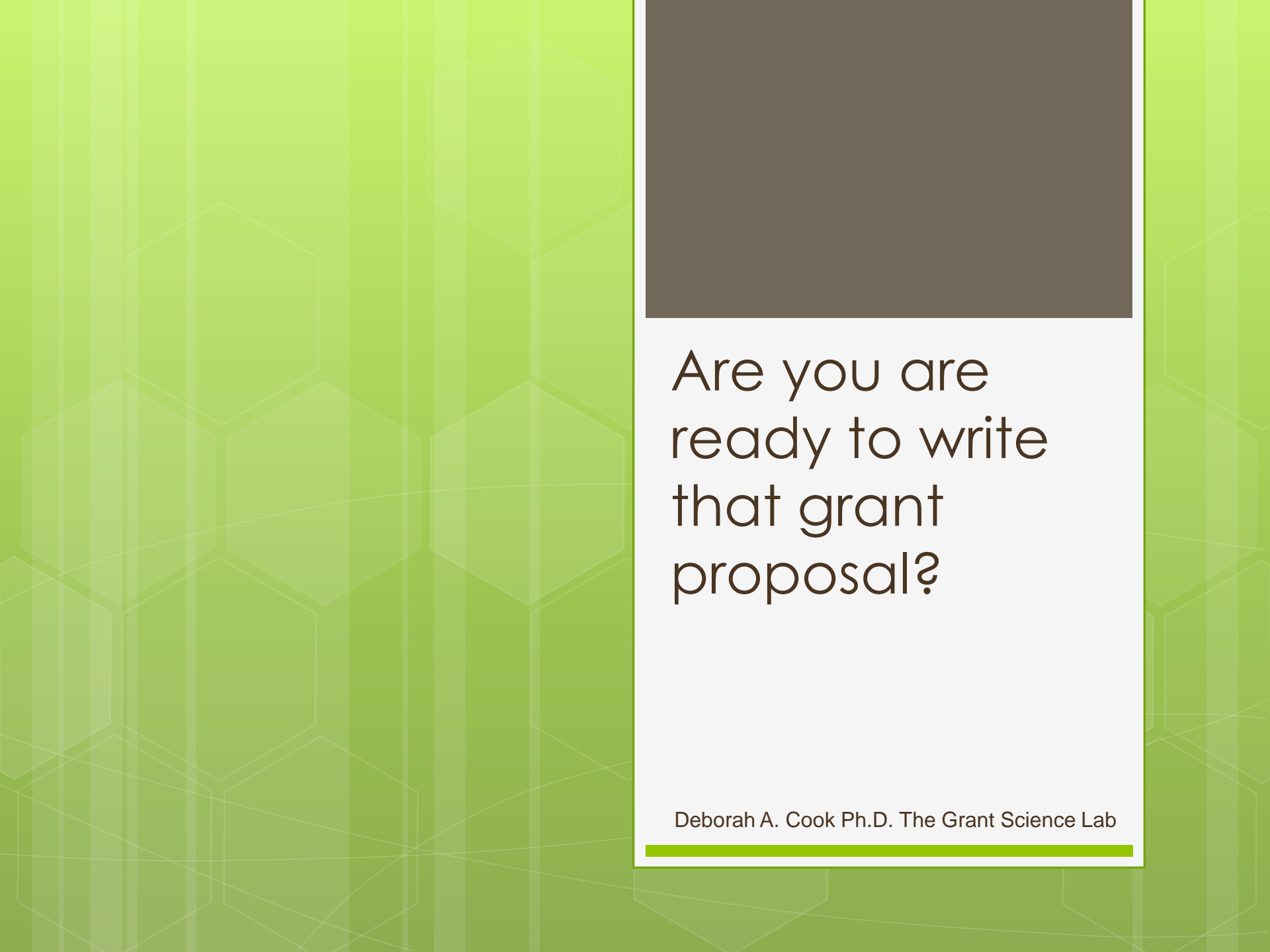# Beginning Your Research Story

- Research stories require money.
  - Money frames the **scope** of your proposed research.
  - Budgets can be revised.
- Scope Specifies
  - Resources
  - Time

Why is scope so important?

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Defining Your Research Focus

- Scope reorients you toward your hypothesis.
- Your hypothesis frames your **specific aims.**
- Your specific aims define your **proposed experiments.**

Are you are ready to write that grant proposal?

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