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Letter Writing and Getting Funded

ORED Seminar Series

Kari Babski-Reeves, PhD, CPE

Professor, Industrial and Systems Engineering
Associate Dean, Bagley College of Engineering

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What is the purpose of a letter of support or collaboration?

1. Required part of a grant package
2. Illustrate to the funding sponsor why they should support your proposal
3. Show that others believe that you can get the job done
4. Shows how the organization is collaborating with others



What is the difference between letters of support and collaboration?

- Letters of Support (LOS): articulates **general support** for the proposal
- Letter of Collaboration/Commitment (LOC): demonstrates the **level of involvement** and the **specific contributions** the letter writer will make to the proposal



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Letters of [blank] ABCs

- Put on letterhead
- Limit to one page
- Provide the letter writer with talking points versus a template (or use different templates based on your prior relationships)
- **Request these early**
- Request signatures in blue ink
- Convey a sense of enthusiasm for the idea/participation
- Say Thank YOU!!!



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Letters of Support ABCs

- Describe the letter writers involvement with the organization
- Explain how the funding will support/solve a problem
- Who should write these?
 - Users of your service
 - Government officials



Letters of Collaboration ABCs

- Description of previous collaborations with the PI/Organization
- Role the letter writer will have in the conduct of the project
- If applicable, the level of financial support or in-kind support (e.g., equipment, data, staff time, facility space, supplies)
 - Be as specific as possible
 - Make sure these match budgets and budget justifications



What not to do

- Include letters when these are not requested — it's a volume issue*
- Do not include multiple "form" letters
- Request letters from those that clearly are not users/contributors



Who are these letters addressed to?

- PI or the funding agency
 - LOSs either
 - LOCs typically to the funding agency
- Structure suggestions
 - Include an Intro
 - Body
 - Closing



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Letter structure

- Introductory paragraph (1-3 sentences)
 - ENTHUSIASTIC support for the project
 - Identification of the research project AND the applicant by name/title
 - Writer's current title and professional role



Example intro

- LOS: “I am writing to express my fullest support for Dr. XXX’s proposal entitled YYY. As a CEO for a public health services provider at Big Name Company, the proposed work will address the significant problem of ZZZ.”
- LOC: “With great enthusiasm, I agree to serve as a Co-Investigator on your research proposal entitled AAA.”



Letter Structure cont.

- Body (1-3 paragraphs)
 - Brief statement of the study purpose and aims
 - Alignment of the proposal with
 - Writer's job or RFP
 - Larger questions, priorities or initiatives in the field
 - Specific mention of how the proposal
 - Addresses a need/gap
 - Builds on or improves previous research or current research
 - Serves as a foundation for future research
 - SPECIFIC roles or contributions of the collaborator in the study
 - Why this collaborator/supporter is the appropriate person/organization/lab to perform the work



Example body

- LOS: “The proposed study is particularly timely given the new parameters for addiction treatment laid out in the Affordable Care Act, and will help answer ongoing questions in the field about the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of co-located, integrated substance use treatment in primary care settings.”
- LOC: “As a co-investigator on this study, I am prepared to make contributions in 2 key areas: 1) provider and clinical recruitment, and 2) analysis of data from cluster randomized trials. In my own work on BBB, we have successfully recruited over 20 primary care clinics and 60 providers. Lessons learned from these experiences will directly inform recruitment strategies in Dr. CCCs proposal study. Additionally, ...”



Letter Structure cont.

- Closing (1-3 sentences)
 - Reaffirmation of the support/interest
 - Reaffirmation of potential impacts/significance
 - Cordial closing



Example Closing

- LOS: “Best of luck with your grant application. I anxiously await the results of this study and the impact on our field.”
- LOC: “I look forward to continued collaboration with Dr DDD on this work.”



Take Aways

- No magic bullet/recipe
- Enthusiasm and relevance
- Avoid form letters
- Request in advance
- Request the right type of letter from the right people
- Include what you would want to know

