Proposal Development Essentials

1. **Be sure that your research and/or project idea is ready to move from conception to proposal**. Are you able to clearly define that what you propose:
   - Addresses an important and timely problem (and how it will do so);
   - Advances knowledge or fills a knowledge gap; and
   - Is well thought out as a project (in terms of timeline and specifics of your activities).

2. **Plan ahead and leave enough time for writing your funding proposal**. Plan before you write. Give yourself enough time to:
   - Find the right funder and the right funding program for your idea;
   - Attend information session(s) on the funding program, familiarize yourself with the components of the application, and ask questions early on as needed;
   - Meet the internal deadlines; and
   - Have your draft reviewed and make revisions accordingly.

3. **Read the guidelines**. Once you have identified a suitable funding program, carefully target your proposal accordingly. Reviewers can easily tell when material has simply been cut and pasted from another application. Identify the components of the proposal before writing and develop logical headings based on the funding program guidelines. Clearly address the evaluation criteria if these are defined in the funding program description

4. **Know your audience and speak to them**. Find out as much as you can about the review process and the review committee. Keep in mind that adjudication committees can include scholars across a number of disciplines, representatives from government and industry, and others. Although within your academic discipline it may be sufficient for your reader to think, "How interesting;" in a funding proposal, you want your reader to think, "This is such an excellent and necessary undertaking; we have to fund this project."

5. **Make it easy for the reviewers**: The proposal is about what the reviewers want to know, not what you want to say. Make it easy for reviewers to find what is being asked for in the funding guidelines. Remember that your subject matter may be complex but the writing need not be. Use clear language that conveys the merit of what you propose to non-specialists as well as to colleagues in your field.

6. **Have a strong and compelling summary**: The summary might be the only section that some reviewers read. State in the first few lines why the proposed research matters. Remember that the summary is not the place to tell the reader a story that ends in an open question. Do not ask questions if your proposed research does not offer an answer. The summary can make a strong first impression and can affect the likelihood that your reader will give close attention to the rest of your proposal. Make sure that your summary is well-structured, clear and concise.

7. **Make good use of your Research Services Office**: Use the administrative, editorial, financial and, in some cases, peer review services offered through your local research office and through the division of the Vice-President Research. Using this tip sheet can help you get your draft in the best shape possible before taking your proposal forward for internal review within your academic unit, division or the University. If you forward a proposal that is not well put together, we can make suggestions to improve it, but the stronger the proposal when it arrives for internal review, the more valuable the feedback we can provide.