

## **Proposal Rejected?**

### **5 Questions to Ask Yourself to Determine Next Steps**

Although disappointing, rejections are just a part of the process for all grant-seekers. Once the initial disappointment has subsided, read your written reviews carefully to determine whether a resubmission might be warranted. Here are 5 questions to consider.

1. **Were the reviews generally favorable, but just not strong enough to be funded?** If so, this is something to work with! The reviewers seem to like your project overall, but perhaps the proposal was just not quite 'tight' enough. Consider having other colleagues (either internal to Wellesley or at other institutions) review and offer suggestions for further improvement. Ask for feedback on the plan and methodology, *but also on the organization, clarity, and style*, which can often elevate a proposal from very good to excellent.
2. **Have the reviewers offered specific concerns in their feedback?** If so, carefully consider which concerns are easily fixed (low hanging fruit), what potential changes might take more effort but are worth doing because they would improve the project; and which suggestions are not worth pursuing. **Caution:** Take reviewer comments seriously, but not as an absolute. If you find a comment vexing or illogical, consider whether it was an isolated opinion of one reviewer or if there seemed to be agreement.
3. **Was there something in the reviews that indicates reviewers were confused or unclear about aspects of your project?** If so, consider where the writing could be clarified to allow the project's strengths to show through.
4. **Were the reviewers unimpressed by the significance or novelty of the project?** This can be difficult. Consider how to better situate the project within the current state of the field, and its implications for advancement. Grants are an exercise in persuasive writing. Don't assume others will immediately see the significance of the project if you haven't specifically articulated it.
5. **Does the project just not fit the funder's program?** If so, then it is best to look for other funders that better fit the project. Funders have their own missions they are required to uphold.

As you consider your next steps, ***consider reaching out to the program officer*** if the funder allows for such interactions. He or she may be able to provide additional insights from the review process.

- Thank them for their work in coordinating the review and for the feedback received.
- Have some questions prepared which demonstrate your careful consideration of the reviews. For example, if you are considering modifying in a certain way for resubmission, does the PO have a sense of how your revised approach might be received by reviewers based on the previous conversation?
- Listen carefully to not only the content of the conversation, but the tone of what the program officer tells you. Are they generally encouraging of a re-submission? Are they hesitant in their encouragement?
- Never argue with the reviews or program officer via this phone call, as that will not be productive. You are just trying to gain additional information to help inform your path forward.