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It's all about money! In times when obtaining research funding is becoming more competitive and, at the same time, more crucial, we look for novel ways to stack the cards in our favor. Along come Andrew J. Friedland and Carol L. Folt with their guide, *Writing Successful Science Proposals*, which raises expectations of having found the answers to our questions. To make this clear up front: I think about the logical, step-by-step structure of the text and the "cookbook approach" presented will be effective tools in making the proposal writing process more efficient for most of us, and improve the chances of success by simply avoiding key mistakes. However, if you are looking for the solution to all your funding woes, you won't find it here (at least, I didn't)!

The book is a transcript of the course on proposal writing taught by the authors at Dartmouth College, and this shows. Graduate students will find that this text is exactly what they need when writing their first proposals, but the usefulness for increasing the amount of funding of advanced researchers is probably limited. From my own personal perspective, it is disappointing that the text focuses entirely on the way research appears to be funded in academia: dreaming up a really cool research project and then finding a source of funding for it. In the everyday life of many consultants and researchers in the nonuniversity environment (and, I believe, increasingly also for researchers in academia), a lot of available funding goes to clearly defined projects via requests for proposals. Even though some academic liberty is certainly possible in designing such projects, many other factors are equally or more important in winning such bids. I would like to see a discussion about how you proceed if the funding organization already thinks that they know what they want!

The strength of the book is, in a way, also its limiting weakness: it provides a very focussed reminder of things that should be common sense for proposal writers, but which we often tend to ignore when we actually sit down and start the writing process. The book includes detailed descriptions and explanations of several key mistakes made by many proposal writers, and how to avoid them, which just by itself significantly increases your funding chances. There is also an up-to-date listing of information sources that can be very valuable when trying to find the right funding program for the research project you have in mind. Most importantly, the authors constantly attempt to initiate innovative thought processes in the proposal writer that will make her/him step beyond the originally conceived concept of the proposed research, develop a more comprehensive vision, and come up with a better research project.

Unfortunately, judging from my own practical experience, the book neglects several key aspects of obtaining funding for research. First, there is no discussion of how to identify the mechanism of the review process, and maybe even prospective reviewers, in order to make sure that the proposed research is presented to a favorable audience. Second, since time is of critical concern for many of us, I missed a discussion of how to ensure that you do not waste your time altogether by writing a particular proposal. My experience is that often, more about the distribution of available funding, both among people and topics, is predecided than is evident from the request for proposal or program description. There is nothing more frustrating than spending a lot of time writing a good proposal, only to find out later that you never had a chance to begin with! Third, there is no discussion of how to plant your research ideas into the

minds of potential funding sources and/or reviewers, and how to stay in touch with what the respective funding programs currently are most interested in funding. I believe that these are potentially the most important keys to success, but naturally also the most difficult. Finally, I found that some of the examples the authors provide for illustrating good proposal writing are actually not particularly well written, and it is a little disappointing that almost all of the exercises suggested to improve your own personal writing skills essentially consist of criticizing other people's proposal (although there is certainly a lot to learn from that).

Despite its somewhat narrow focus, this excellently written book provides pleasant and entertaining reading. Since money governs all our considerations here, I conclude that this book is a good investment for any researcher writing proposals: you invest $12.95 and an hour of your time, and I am convinced that the potential gain (i.e. one funded proposal that would otherwise get rejected) by far outweighs these costs. The question is not, Can I afford to read this book?, but, Can I afford not to? I am looking forward to using this text as a guide through my next proposal writing process, and I hope that with its help, I will finally land that big grant my research so desperately needs!

Wallschlager, D. 2000. Book Review. Journal of Environmental Quality 29: 2050.