

Federal Funding for Native
Languages:
National Science Foundation's
Documenting Endangered
Languages Program

Colleen M. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.
Documenting Endangered Languages
ATALM 2015

September 11, 2015



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Documenting Endangered Languages

- Joint funding initiative between NSF and NEH
- Grants submitted to National Science Foundation for merit review
- Base NSF DEL budget for FY16 \$2.3 million, but with funds from other programs at NSF and NEH, \$4.5 million in awards
 - NSF internal partnerships include Polar Programs, CISE and TCUP (Human Resource Development)
- Note: DEL does not fund language revitalization



DEL Program Page at NSF

- <http://1.usa.gov/1gryRP9>
- Resources, solicitation link, announcements

Check out the DEL handout for resource links



3 Areas of Emphasis

- **Language Description:** fieldwork, documentation, preparation of dictionaries, grammars, and databases
- **Infrastructure:** digitization and creation of access to documentary materials, workshops, and conferences
- **Computational Methods:** development of standards and tools to make materials widely available in Web-based formats, often in collaboration between theoretical and field linguists and computational linguists



Overview of NSF Proposal Types

- **Standard Grants (senior research proposals)**
- **NEH Fellowships**
- **Dissertation Improvement Grants**
- **Conferences/Workshops/Training**
- **CAREER grants**
- **Rapid response research (RAPID)**
- **Early concept grants for exploratory research (EAGER)**
- **Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU)**
- **Research Experiences for Graduate Students (REG)**



Proposal Basics

- You write it.
- Your (U.S.) institution submits it.
 - DEL Fellowships can be awarded to unaffiliated individuals
- NSF reviews it (~6 months).
 - Compliance check
 - In-house reviews (sometimes)
 - Ad hoc reviews (usually)
 - Advisory panels
 - Program officer recommendation
 - Division Director recommendation
 - Division of Grants & Agreements



Competitive Proposals

- Between 20 – 24% of DEL senior research grants are funded
- DEL solicitation allows \$150K/year, up to \$450K total over three years
 - Most DEL proposals are funded for less than \$450K (look at awards to see amounts and topics on Fastlane)
- Proposals that review well and are ranked highly by the DEL panel may still not end up funded
- **NSF Fact: Principal Investigators submit on average about 2.3 proposals for every award they receive.**



Official NSF review criteria

Intellectual Merit:

- Importance
- Qualifications
- Originality
- Transformative?
- Conception & organization
- Access to resources

Broader Impacts:

- Training
- Mentoring
- Diversity
- Infrastructure
- Dissemination/
Public awareness
- Societal Benefits



Relatively recent changes

- More emphasis on Broader Impacts
- Postdoc Mentoring Plan (1 page)
- Data Management Plan (2 pages)
- Statement of Consultation: Include an
 - Explicit statement regarding the consultation with the speech communities where research is to be conducted; PI must have appropriate permissions.
- Transparency & Accountability:
 - Abstracts & titles must communicate importance to public
 - Whole portfolio approach



Data Management Plan

- Language documentation is of little value if it cannot be accessed.
- Expectation that vast majority of data generated by the DEL project will be publically accessible with minimal restrictions
- The [SBE directorate requires that for data management plans](#), if prior NSF support has been received, subsequent proposals should report on relevant data management
- Consider costs of archiving in budget (8% of direct cost rate total), outline long-term institutional commitment to data preservation and access
- DELAMAN member archives are one possible resource as an archive
 - <http://www.delaman.org/>



DEL Proposal Processing



- http://nsf.gov/bfa/dias/policy/merit_review/.



Merit Review

- Individual proposals are sent to peer reviewers
 - DEL reviewers typically hold a PhD in linguistics or anthropology and have expertise in the topic(s) of the proposal
- DEL panel reviews all the proposals and ranks them with regard to each other
- Program Officer reviews the proposal, analyzes reviewer and panel input, and considers other factors in whether to recommend a proposal for funding.



Big Picture Advice

- Read the solicitation
- Talk to the Program Director
- Look at available resources on DEL (outreach videos, office hours, abstracts of awards)
- Put together a team that can carry out the proposed research (involve a linguist/linguistic expertise)
- Write a proposal that conveys the scientific merit of the project in terms of intellectual merit and broader impacts
- Why should your project be funded over another one (on a related language? with the same small number of speakers? Is there a unique contribution to knowledge?)



TCUP Funding Stream at DEL

- Building research and scholarly training capacity in documentary and descriptive linguistics, computational methodology, archiving and preservation.
- Attracting, retraining, and supporting TCU students in independent research endeavors.
- Providing research training by non-TCU institutions to enable the successful transition of TCU students to major research universities



DEL Outreach Videos

- New series of DEL Outreach videos freely available on YouTube
- Expert advice for how to design effective projects and write competitive proposals.
- https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLx12labZqbzGbA0rQU0xg5cMzz9rp_dqY
 - Video production supported by NSF-DEL grant #BCS 1500695.



Upcoming DEL Webinar in January 2016

- We have scheduled a DEL webinar for Tuesday, January 19, 2016 at 3 pm (EST)
 - Will require advance registration
 - Will be archived
-
- Keep an eye on the DEL program page for more information



DEL at ATALM

- Friday: NSF and NEH both at the “Federal Funding for Native Languages” session Fri at 11 am in Congressional A
- Saturday: DEL Project Directors Forum at ATALM Session 602 Saturday at 2 pm in Congressional B
 - Digital Data Management for Native American Language Documentation, Archiving, and Use: A Forum with DEL Project Directors
- Exhibit Hall table for DEL



Contact Info (also on NSF DEL Handout)



NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

Directorate for Social, Behavioral, and Economic Sciences
Division of Behavioral and Cognitive Sciences

Colleen M. Fitzgerald, Ph.D.

Program Director
Documenting Endangered Languages

4201 Wilson Boulevard
Suite 995N
Arlington, Virginia 22230

phone: (703) 292-4381
fax: (703) 292-9068
e-mail: cfitzger@nsf.gov
<http://1.usa.gov/1gryRP9>

