What’s a Concept Paper?

Organize your thoughts for productive discussion with a Program Official. This should be 1-3 pages in length.

- **Grant Purpose**: Briefly, you want a grant from which institute/agency to do what?
- **Problem/Background**: Explain why you think this topic should be studied. Demonstrate you know the institute’s priorities.
- **Significance**: Explain why this is important to the field.
- **Question**: What hypotheses will you test, and what model will guide your hypotheses? (Note that while only research projects have hypotheses, programs generally still have a model that guides the work being proposed.)
- **Design/Analysis**: What is the study design that will enable testing your hypotheses? What statistical approach will be used?
- **Team**: Who will be the key participants (co-investigators and organizations) on the project?
- **Miscellaneous**: Are there other issues that may be relevant to your plans?

Source: NIH Regional Workshop, 2008

Contacting a Program Officer

**Best Practices**

- Be courteous and professional at all times.
- Make an appointment at mutual convenience.
- Know the role of the program officer at that particular agency. Don’t ask them to go where they can’t.
- Be concrete, specific.
- Develop a concept paper. Send it to the program officer before the meeting.
- Be on time and be prepared.
- Have someone else listen in on the conversation and take notes.
- After you meet in person, by phone or email, send an email thank you to the program officer, with an indication of where you are going next.