Writing grant proposals with AI

Dos:

1. **AI will not write a grant proposal for you**. Your ideas, creativity and expertise are what counts.
2. **Feasibility assessment:** Upload the RFP and any other guidelines into AI; interrogate for eligibility, check your rough ideas. Use AI to search for existing ideas, trends, or research that align with the RFP requirements. Run idea generation sessions for brainstorming, asking AI for related projects or successful examples. It is important to read the entire RFP once you decide an application is feasible.
3. **Break the Application into Chunks:** Ask AI to help you create an outline for the proposal document out of the RFP. Check for accuracy. Then write every section one by one, asking AI to help formulate your ideas. It cannot produce more than about 1000 words of meaningful text. Chunking output is essential.
4. **Use AI for Proofreading and Refinement:** Employ AI to edit grammar, style, and flow for smaller sections of your proposal. Use AI to enhance clarity and conciseness in your text. Ask AI to check for vocabulary consistency throughout the proposal. Always give a manual final reading.
5. **Use AI to Cross-Check Eligibility:** Ask AI to check your draft against eligibility criteria and RFP specifications to avoid missing key requirements. AI is excellent at reviewing proposals against checklists or evaluation rubrics.
6. **Utilize AI for Research and Citation:** Use specialized research tools (like OpenAI's Search and custom GPTs) to survey existing research. Beware of hallucinations, check references in Google Scholar.
7. **Prompt for Creative Feedback:** While AI is not highly original, it can suggest frameworks and minor tweaks to your ideas by comparing similar past works. It can also recognize a genuinely novel idea.
8. **Ask to format:** Most AI engines can create tables and graphs/charts. ChatGPT can create Excel and Word files in the background, formatted at your request, as long as they are not very long.
9. **Disclose:** If required by the funder agency, disclose AI use in application preparation briefly but specifically.

Don'ts:

1. **Avoid Long, Continuous Text Requests:** AI is less effective when tasked with generating long segments. Break down tasks like narrative structure into smaller pieces of about 500-1000 words.
2. **Do not Rely on AI for Creative Breakthroughs:** AI tends to provide safe, non-innovative responses. Do not expect it to provide groundbreaking ideas for your grant's theme or approach. Use AI as a starting point for creativity but rely on human insight for innovation.
3. **Do not Rely on AI for Critical Assessment:** AI may overlook nuanced weaknesses and provide overly positive feedback; always seek a human reviewer for rigorous critique.
4. **Do not Submit AI-Generated Text Without Reworking It:** Text from AI needs personalization. Avoid the trap of copying AI content verbatim, which may feel generic and lack your unique voice.
5. **Avoid Asking AI to Judge Creative or Strategic Elements:** AI will struggle to evaluate highly subjective aspects like creative fit with funders' vision. Reserve this for experienced colleagues and ORIED staff.
6. **Do not Solely Depend on AI for Idea Generation:** AI works best when guided by your original thoughts. If you upload previous applications or papers, make sure you drive the brainstorming process, using AI as a supplementary tool.