

Develop a Fundable Concept

The Office of Sponsored Projects can help you assess the likelihood of your concept being funded and identify approaches to make your concept more attractive to sponsoring organizations. To develop your concept and evaluate its potential:

1. **Create a clear, high-level project definition.** Questions to ask include:
 - What is your project's major goal?
 - What organizations or groups of people will benefit from the project? (examples: economically disadvantaged, minority, rural, community college faculty, dairy operations, etc.)
 - What type of project is this? (examples: research, community outreach/service, curriculum development, etc.)
 - How does this concept fit with the University's stated mission? If the concept falls outside of the University's mission, you are likely to have trouble obtaining approval and/or internal resources to support your work.
2. **Objectively assess the need for the work you are proposing.** Although you believe your idea has merit, you need to confirm potential sponsors are likely to agree with you. The needs assessment done while you're developing your concept eventually can serve as the basis for a strongly written need statement in the grant proposal. To assess need:
 - Survey key persons and/or institutions likely to be involved in the project to confirm its importance to them.
 - Identify early research and pilot studies to support your arguments about the need for the project.
 - Thoroughly research all similar work to confirm your concept breaks new ground.
3. **Evaluate your own strengths and weaknesses as a project director.** As project director, you are responsible for the success or failure of the grant application and of the actual project, should it be funded.
 - Make a realistic determination of how much time you have available to develop the proposal and to manage the project if you are awarded funding. If your time appears to be too limited to insure quality work, consider revising the scope of the project, adding a co-project director, or waiting until you have more time available.
 - If lack of experience as a project director, as perceived by a potential sponsor, might compromise your proposal's success, consider adding a senior consultant or a co-project director or working in collaboration with another institution or other researchers who complement your research strengths.
4. **Assess your college's and Tarleton's strengths and weaknesses in context of your proposed project.** Absence of recognized capabilities and/or insufficient resources could compromise your proposal's success.
5. **To test your likelihood of success if you are considering approaching a specific entity or entities for funding, consider:**
 - How does your project meet the required capabilities mentioned in the sponsor's guidelines?
 - Are you and Tarleton both eligible for funding from the sponsor?
 - How does your experience and project, as well as Tarleton and its research reputation, make you a unique contender?
 - From the entity's point of view, what are your strengths and weaknesses?
 - From the entity's point of view, what are Tarleton's strengths and weaknesses?