

Creating an Idea Others Will Invest In!



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Welcome! This series is designed to help folks at all stages of career in the arts & humanities to do two important things. 1) plan and 2) practice those things that allow you to grow the reach and impact of your work so that more people can benefit.

Each week we'll have a framework – a heuristic or thinking tool that I will introduce to you and ask you to spend some time with in order to make plans for yourself and the folks you collaborate closely with. My hope is that each week will inspire more questions and ideas we can take up in the next session!

Agenda

- I: Charting Your Path to Intellectual Leadership
- ▪ II: Creating an Idea Others Will Invest In
- III: Building a Collaborative Team
- IV: Developing a Funding Strategy

The weeks ahead!

Our second session, today, is the one I've seen help lots of people get started on a quality proposal. We will talk about what kinds of ideas get funded. Or, as I like to say, how to make an idea others will invest in.

Each week, I'll try to help you answer one question...so here's our question this week.

Questions we'll try to answer ...

What others do you have?
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- I: Where is my career taking me? when is the right time to go after grant funding?
- II: What kinds of projects need grant support and what kind of projects get funded?
- III: How can I build a track record of success with a team that will make funders confident in our ability to be good stewards of resources?
- IV: How can I attract sustained support for my work without selling out my goals and values?

I have been talking about today's topic for quite a while. But I always like bringing it to a new group. If you want to go back and review what I say today or share it with others, here's a video you are free to use:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lz9Yf15DIik&list=LLc2TPc-9pmVKbwe_RvToEw&index=12&t=0s

II. Creating an idea others can *invest* in...

- Transform an interest of *yours* into something others can invest in...
- This idea becomes the seed for a number of specific projects...
- And is *one half* of a successful proposal

A successful proposal must have two things. Today we are going to talk about one of those things. And maybe it's the one you first think about when you think about writing a successful proposal. You need a good idea! And it has to be the kind of idea others want to invest in. Now a good idea is not necessarily a project...rather it can be the seed for a number of projects. So writing about your idea and a project that allows you to move that idea forward in some way is the real challenge.

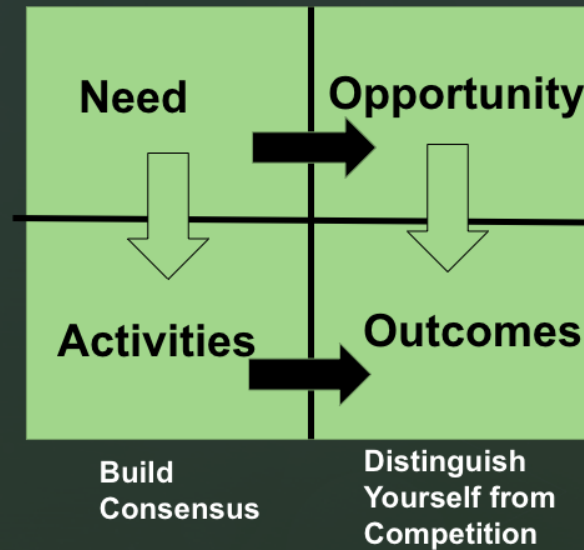
What is the other half of a good proposal? We'll talk all about that next week in session three. But I'll tell you now: it's a team who can make your idea come to life. You have to build your reader's trust that your good idea will be realized by the group you've assembled.

But first...let's linger a moment on one of the words I've been using...



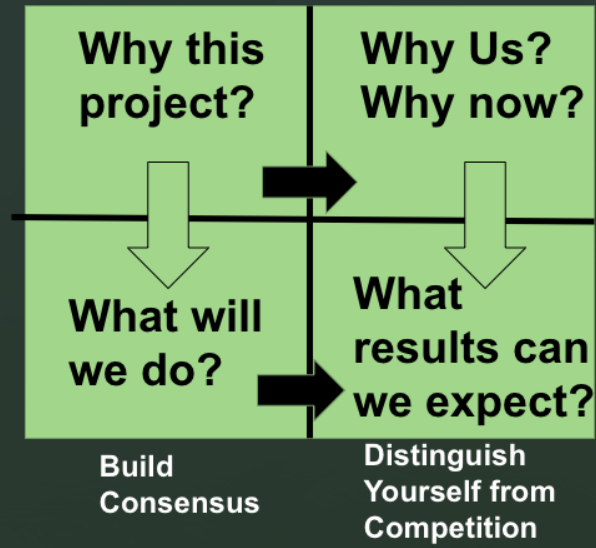
What do I mean by invest? I know it has financial connotations, but what I mean is something closer to its etymology. In-vest. To wear or put on. I want you to hear my use of this word like this: your cool idea is a t-shirt. And you want to get people to wear it. Not only that, you want folks to feel proud of it. Like hey, look at this t-shirt I'm wearing! That's what we are after.

Investable Ideas – A Heuristic

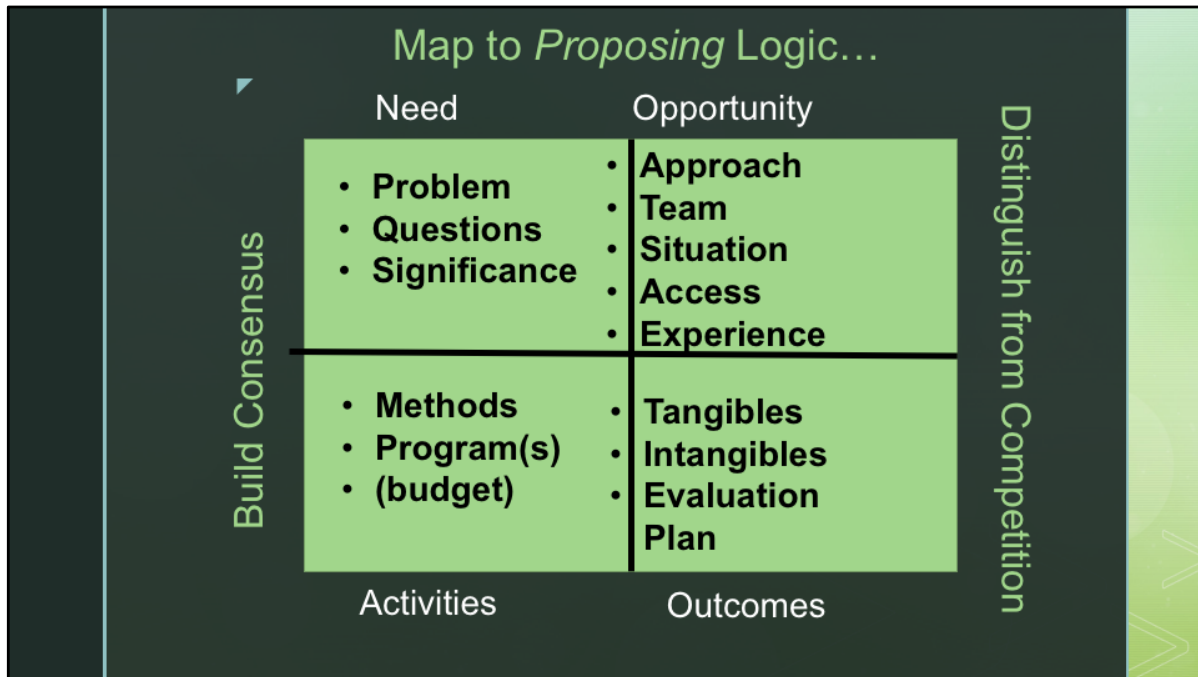


The four boxes here prompt you to make some lists. I recommend you make them together with folks you want to work with on a project. This helps turn your idea into something compelling for other people. On the left side of the chart you'll list things that, generally, allow you to build consensus with your would be reviewers. A sense of "yes...this is the way to see the problem and this is the best way to address it." Or maybe "yes, this is an unmet need and we would really see this as the way to meet that need." On the right side of the chart, you are helping reviewers to see why you and your team are the best choice among others. That involves framing the unique opportunities your team has to address the challenge or meet the need, which will in turn allow you to get results that others cannot.

▶ **Investable Ideas – key questions**



Here are some questions to get you thinking about how to fill the boxes. They help you get to needs, activities, opportunity, and outcomes.



And here's how these quadrants map to the parts of a proposal. The needs box helps you frame the problem, identify questions and communicate the significance of the work to be done. The activities box helps you talk about methods and gets you the raw material you need to build a project plan and budget. The opportunity area allows you to talk about your unique approach, the talents of your team, your access to a particular resource or population, etc. and the outcomes box gives you material to discuss what your results will be, what goes in your evaluation plan, etc.



Ok, practice time! In your breakout groups, I want you to take a moment to practice one of the two moves here. Building consensus or Distinguishing yourself from the competition. I've given you a question for each of the boxes. So in your groups, choose the Left or Right side and try to fill the boxes. You can do this conversationally so your peers might ask follow ups to help you flesh out the details. Try to time it so each person gets to practice! Work on getting your group members to wear your t-shirt!



For next week: fill the boxes for a project you care about!