25 Rules on how to Write a Good Proposal

Rule 1:
You need to have a good scientific idea or problem to be attacked!

Rule 2:
Good or bad idea – that is defined by your peers. Take this into account!

Rule 3:
Before you start to write – make sure that your mission fits the mission of the funding agency!

Rule 4:
Be optimistic – there are many, many funding agencies...

Rule 5:
Find others who successfully applied to this agency. Study a sample proposal!

Rule 6:
Funding agency people are only partly administrators – they have experience, contact them with your questions!
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Rule 7:
Think about external and internal deadlines!

Rule 8:
The display of the proposal should be attractive. Avoid spelling errors!

Rule 9:
The peer-reviewers are not paid! And often are from different fields.

Rule 10:
The title of your proposal should be sexy!
But do not prostitute yourself!

Rule 11:
Follow strictly the rules of the funding agency for the title page etc.

Rule 12:
The abstract is important. It serves as a first, sometimes also final information about the proposal.

Sample abstract:
The proposed study aims at collecting statistical information about successful proposals. Details are found in the proposal proper.
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Rule 13:
Proposal writing is a very ritualized process.

Rule 14:
Your scientific hypothesis should be testable! And it should be significant.

Rule 15:
Specific aims are important! You cannot do everything at the same time.
- Extra-solar magnetospheres:
  - Find scaling laws for magnetospheres
  - Find scaling laws for planetary magnetic field
  - Apply laws found to known ESPs
  - Find scaling laws for radiation

Rule 16:
Current state of knowledge section is very important and critical.
- What is known?
- What is not known?
- Why is your hypothesis important?
- Give a fair review of previous and competing work. It is a peer-review process!

Rule 17:
Experience of your team

Rule 18:
Pilot study results are very important.
...but some colleagues already did the research they are asking funding for. This is somewhat absurd and non-scientific...
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Rule 19:
Methods and tools to be used should be described in some detail.

Rule 20:
Prove your management qualities and provide an organigramme.

Rule 21:
Provide them with a time table and schedule!

Rule 22:
Ressource level: be as detailed as possible! Add a bit for the referees to cancel.

Rule 23:
Only the one who tries can win!

Rule 24:
If you loose - keep on trying!

If faut imaginer Sisyphe heureux
Albert Camus
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Rule 25: If you win, have a party and invite me!