WRITING "COMPETITIVE" PROPOSALS
FOR COMPETITIVE GRANTS

THE BASIC RULE: <u>READ CAREFULLY AND FOLLOW THE GUIDANCE.</u>

THE SECONDARY RULE: <u>MAKE IT EASY FOR THE REVIEWERS.</u>

ADDRESS EACH RANKING CRITERIA CLEARLY AND COMPLETELY. The ranking of the proposal will be based upon how well these criteria are addressed, and they may carry more weight than the actual biological aspects of the proposal. Ranking criteria for some programs are focused largely upon process and administrative capability rather than on the biological merits of the proposal.

INCLUDE A SEPARATE "RANKING CRITERIA SUMMARY SHEET". Make it easy for the reviewer to evaluate how well the proposal meets the ranking and eligibility criteria. A summary sheet prevents the reviewer from having to search out this information in the text.

MAXIMIZE NON-FEDERAL MATCH TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE. Most competitive grant programs give extra points to proposals that reduce the federal share of the total project cost by including additional non-federal funds or in-kind support from partners.

INCLUDE EVIDENCE OF FIRM COMMITMENTS BY PARTNERS FOR CASH AND/OR IN-KIND MATCH. This is necessary to receive the extra points for reducing the federal share of the total project cost.

DO NOT INCLUDE LETTERS OF SUPPORT. Letters of support carry no weight in the scoring process, unless they are letters of commitment of cash and/or in-kind match from partners.

INDICATE IF PARTIAL FUNDING WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE. Most competitive grant programs have a finite amount of money available, and it generally is insufficient to fully fund all proposals received. If partial funding is acceptable, the chances of receiving funding may be increased.

FOLLOW EXACTLY THE FORMAT SPECIFIED IN THE GUIDANCE. Unless otherwise specified, use the standard Need, Objectives, Expected Results and Benefits, and Approach format. This is the format most familiar to the Federal Aid staff reviewing the proposal.

USE STANDARD FONTS AND FONT SIZES. Unusual, non-standard fonts and font sizes may irritate the reviewer and distract attention from the proposal content.

NUMBER ALL PAGES. Make it easy for the reviewer to locate important sections.

LIMIT THE NUMBER OF PAGES—BE BRIEF BUT COMPLETE. Make it easy for reviewers; they have many proposals to read and evaluate.

OMIT FANCY BINDERS, TABS, AND ATTACHMENTS. The proposal will be reviewed by persons all over the country. Only the actual proposal will be photocopied and circulated to the reviewers; the fancy binders, tabs, and most attachments will likely never be seen by the actual review team.