

Fact Sheet: The Deity's in the Details

Details answer questions. A lack of details translates into unanswered questions in a reviewer's mind, and that translates into unfunded projects. Detailed proposals have "street cred."

There are five critical types of detail: (1) illustrative, (2) process, (3) evidentiary, (4) corroborative, and (5) cost details. Here is a clarification, with example, of each:

1. Illustrative details: These illustrate a general or theoretical claim, and are particularly important when projecting use of grant funds.
 - a. This example is from Hood College's proposal for an NEH Challenge Grant (1998): "With Endowment funding, we imagine that a first year's activities might include out bringing to Hood [College] Professor Barbara Field to give a major lecture on "Maryland as Middle Ground during the Civil War." Frederick Community College might then organize a complementary symposium on the oral history of the region, with Professor Bruce Thompson (FCC) talking about his project on the oral history of the civil rights movement in Frederick County, and professors Hoda Zaki and Nina Banks (Hood College) discussing their oral histories of Frederick's African-American women (18).
2. Process: These clarify what will be done, when, where, and by whom.
 - a. You might start with this sentence, "I will interview students to ascertain their prior knowledge about biology and biology courses," then detail it be rewriting, "I will conduct 30-minute focus sessions with groups of 4-6 students within the first 2 weeks of the semester to ascertain their prior knowledge about biology and biology courses."
3. Evidentiary. These present evidence for a claim.
 - a. To make credible a claim that you have a good track record for papers accepted at major conferences, you write, "I have presented 19 papers on scientific rhetoric at major venues, such as the Modern Language Association Conference, the Conference on College Composition and Communication, and the Rhetorical Society of America national conferences."
4. Corroborative. These are close to "evidentiary" detail, but they are used more for giving certainty than evidence.
 - a. This example is from the "Project Goals" of the Abstract for U/Wisconsin-Madison's proposal for 2003 IMLS National Leadership Grant: "Digitizing more than 900 hours of cassette, reel-to-reel, 78 rpm disc, and rare SoundScriber recordings, selected from three distinctive sound collections: the MKI North American German Dialect Archive, the *DARE* fieldwork collection, and the Mills Music Library ethnic music collection, which will be stored on hard drives for future use and for additional archival purposes."
5. Cost details. These are necessary for reviewers to see and replicate your method of cost calculation for all line items.
 - a. Instead of budgeting for "\$20,000 for 20 computers for a new lab (estimating \$1,000 each)," you should budget "\$12, 980 for 20 Dell Inspiron Notebooks with 2 Duo Processors. customizable and wireless-ready (\$649.00 each)."