

# How Proposals are Reviewed (cont)

Typical process:

- Reviewers categorize into bins (excellent, poor)
- Reviewer “panel” might synthesize individual reviews
- Administrator makes final decision based in large measure on bin “scores” of reviewer aggregate

Warning: Evaluation (of proposals, papers, applications, exams) is never an exact science. There's a lot of luck and randomness in the process.

- For any binary decision from a pile of objects, there's always three categories: Definite yes, grey area, definite no.

# Writing the Proposal

Balancing act between your goals and the funder's goals

Two fundamental approaches:

- Write to the solicitation
- Find a solicitation that matches your funding goal

Q: Why should anyone give **you** money?

A: Because you fulfill their goal better than the competition.

You must focus heavily on the funder's goals

# Strategies for Success (1)

[Taken from VT Research Division pages]

Know the funder! Contact before and during the proposal writing process can increase your chances of success by as much as 300%. Try to find out about general trends and any new areas of interest.

Preview successful applications from grant seekers with projects similar to your own. You'll get good ideas and an understanding of the competition.

Be clear about your goals before you begin the application process. Draw up a plan that outlines your project goals for at least the next five years.

Research your potential funders thoroughly and apply what you learn. "Fitting" your proposal into their program by ignoring their guidelines just won't work.

## **Strategies for Success (2)**

Your original contact letter to a foundation or corporation can be very important. Make it as strong and to-the-point as possible.

If possible have program officials review a 3-5 page summary of your proposal. You'll learn if you're on the right track, and may save some time in the long run.

After identifying available funding organize your efforts into writing the proposal, marketing, and management.

Read and follow the instructions. With any funder, but especially with federal agencies, not following the rules exactly can ruin your chances, even if your proposal is a brilliant one.

Prove the existence of the problem you propose to solve with data, statistics, case studies.

Keep it simple! A successful proposal is clear, factual, supportable, and professional.