



Partners Can Make or Break Successful Proposals

Common Pitfalls of Partnership Strategies

Lead Institution



Failed to consider specific opportunity requirements



Only consulted publication data to identify potential partners



Defaulted to past partnerships



Only considered faculty preferences when making partner decisions

Partner Institution



Failed to market research expertise and assets



Waited to be solicited by a lead institution



Assumed niche strengths were not relevant for L&C opportunities



Did not leverage faculty networks and connections

Result:

L&C proposal rejected due to gaps in expertise unaddressed through chosen partnership

Result:

Missed a well-aligned opportunity to partner on L&C award

How To Select Your Ideal Partner



Factors for Lead Institutions to Consider



Track Record

History of success with agency or award



Equipment and Facilities

Specialized infrastructure needed for success



Network

Connections to agency, other institutions, community partners



Designations

Institutional designations (e.g., MSI¹, NCI²)



Geography

Locations of previously awarded institutions

Case in Brief: 2017 NSF ERC³ in Cellular Metamaterials

Lead: Boston University

Partners: Florida International University, University of Michigan

Affiliates: Argonne National Laboratory, Columbia University

Strategic Considerations:

- **Track Record:** University of Michigan professor Stephen Forrest is national expert with strong NSF funding record
- **Equipment and Facilities:** Argonne National Laboratory has Advanced Photon Sourcing equipment critical to project
- **Network:** FIU has strong network of regional schools and communities for education and outreach programming
- **Designations:** Columbia University designated as the Bio-Imaging Core for the NIH Tissue Engineering Resource Center
- **Geography:** No active ERCs in the Northeast

1) Minority Serving Institution.
2) National Cancer Institute.
3) Engineering Research Center.

How to Position Yourself as a Partner



Three Approaches to Promote Strengths, Capabilities



Market Strengths

Highlight unique research strengths and available resources to other universities, agencies, and the broader public through strategic plan and other university marketing materials.

Example:

FIU's *BeyondPossible2020* strategic plan highlights their "Preeminent Programs" and regional community engagement.

Result: FIU has built a strong reputation as an expert in niche disciplines as well as education and outreach.



Demonstrate History

Promote past research partnerships and the depth of cross-institutional engagements through press releases and university media outlets.

Example:

FIU promotes involvement in L&C research partnerships on their website (e.g., [PATHS-UP](#)) and in media announcements (e.g., [ASSIST](#)).

Result: FIU has gained recognition from other schools and research offices as a preferred partner by promoting their engagement on three NSF ERCs¹.



Proactively Outreach

Identify and proactively reach out to institutions that complement or advance existing research strengths to develop personal connections.

Example:

FIU relocated their Director of External Partnerships to DC to network and build relationships with prospective partners.

Result: FIU has established stronger connections with universities, federal agencies, and industry—which has directly led to new research collaborations.

1) Engineering Research Center.