

# Tom and Norm's Presentation Caveats:



Between the two of us, we have reviewed more than 500 proposals in our day.

We obviously have not been successful in avoiding proposal review duties over the years

Many people regard us as grumpy old white guys who should have been turned out to pasture years ago

The views expressed by us are strictly our own, and do not reflect the those of our otherwise respectable organizations, NFWF, KCF, or any of our other former funders

This talk is part of secret plan the two of us cooked up so we won't be asked to review any more proposals in the future

# Behind the curtain – how are proposals actually reviewed?

- By a team of serious people who are seriously busy
- Like a resume: may spend only 15 to 20 minutes per proposal, but longer on the really good ones
- Like a internal job interview: we probably know you, or at least your organizational reputation (or lack of one)
- Reviewers try not to be biased, scrupulously avoid conflicts of interest, and really want to fund good projects!
- Most agree on the best and the worst proposals, but huge variability in how they feel about ones in the middle

# Good Cop: Conservation Metrics



OK to be modest in what you seek to accomplish

Be very clear and precise about the restoration units that your project will actually produce (e.g. acres treated, linear feet, folks reached)

Try your best to honestly use the pollutant reduction metrics, but we understand that not everybody is a professional nutrient accountant (thankfully)

# Bad Cop: Conservation Metrics



- Don't bother to actually compute the metrics for the project
- Trivial pollutant reductions for the grant money invested
- Blatant BMP cheating, double counting or inflation
- "TBD" or other fuzziness in what you propose to implement

# Good Cop: Grant Match



- Match is there to ensure that your community has some skin in the game that you can actually document that down the road
- Cash is king, but flexibility in how to value non-cash organizational & partner contributions are credited
- Non-cash match: Contributed services, volunteer hours, intend to apply, pledged, federal vs. non-federal, etc. etc.
- OK to be creative, but not fraudulent, when it comes to match

# Bad Cop: Grant Match



- Everything is non-cash
- Match “partners” have not submitted an individual letter of support
- The match is not really related to your implementation plan
- No prior history (or capacity) for grant compliance

# Good Cop: Support Letters and Partners

- Enthusiastic Partner support letters that clearly show you are in this together!
- Specific details on financial or staff commitment, defined project role, project understanding, experience working together in the past signed by a real “executive” who is accountable for delivering the goods.
- The gestation period for a good support letter is 3 to 6 months, not 24 hours before the proposal is due



# Bad Cop: Support Letters and Partners



- Project landowner is absent
- Form Letters w/o any specific project commitments
- Every Senator or Congressperson in the State/Watershed (we are not easy to impress)
- Nothing from key project partner or jurisdiction to show that they are aware of what you are planning to do



# Good Cop: Project Budget and Implementation

- Good split between staff \$\$\$ vs. project implementation \$\$\$
- Money reserved for your key project partners
- Money for project management and grant compliance, but don't go crazy w/ organizational overhead (indirect)
- Realistic Construction Cost Estimates for Restoration Project



# Bad Cop: Project Budget and Implementation

- 100% pass thru to a consultant and/or no budget for project management/grant compliance
- No budget for actually putting anything in the ground
- Reimbursement for travel to dog tracks, foreign islands, or tanning salons



# Good Cop: Proposal Writing and Work Plan

- Need not be super long, but be like the first paragraph of a newspaper story = who, what, where, when and how
- Why the project deserves an investment of public dollars
- Clear and direct writing, not a lot of sales or fluff language



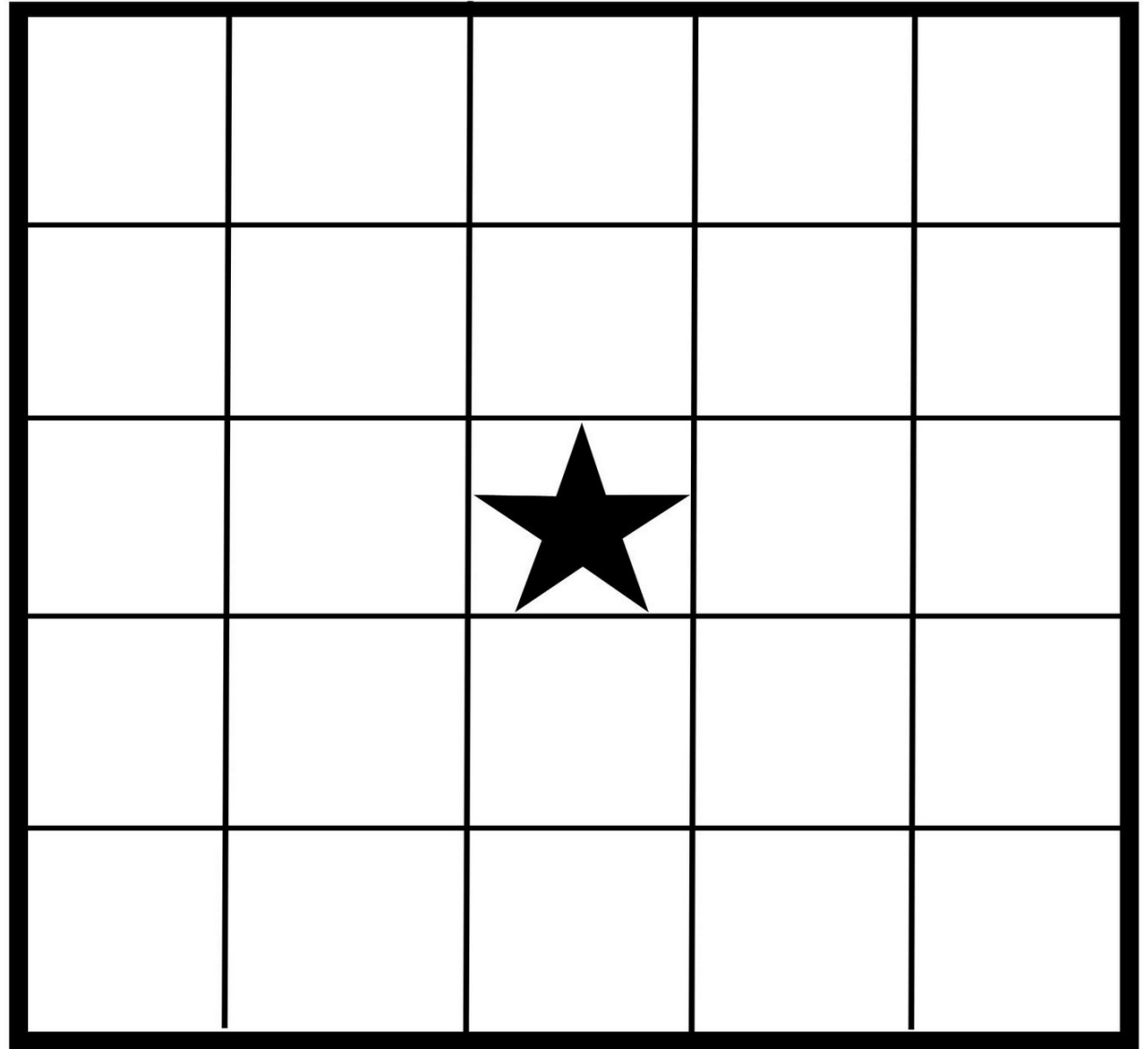
# Bad Cop: Proposal Writing and Work Plan

- Avoid Buzzword Bingo
- Why is the Project Worth the Investment/Risk?
- No effort to connect w/ objectives or targeting outlined in excruciating detail in the RFP
- Simply bad writing



**B I N G O**

Don't  
Commit  
“Buzzword”  
Bingo



# Good Cop: Research, Monitoring & Project Evaluation

- Try to do one of the above pretty well
- Everybody realizes that this stuff is really hard, and sampling seldom produces the “perfect result”
- We closely evaluate the past scientific experience of the folks doing the monitoring
- Serious efforts to use surveys, participation and other metrics to track/measure public involvement,



# Bad Cop: Research, Monitoring & Project Evaluation

- Trust me, it will be beautiful
- Half-assed monitoring or research efforts that lack input from real scientists who have done it before
- Lack of a Study Design to Measure Resident Behavior Change
- Others?

