TIPS: CONTACTING A PROGRAM OFFICER

Why should I contact a program officer(s)?
- Making contact with the administrator(s) associated with the grant program in which you are interested (also known as the program officer) is extremely important for several reasons:
  - Program priorities may change, but those changes are not always reflected in the Request for Proposals (RFPs).
  - A project might be a better fit with the research priorities of another office within the agency.
  - Program officers can offer advice on which parts of your idea are a good fit with the RFP, which parts are not of interest, and which parts are not fundable.
  - Sometimes program officers suggest other PIs to contact for advice and insight and/or who might be potential collaborators.

How do I contact a program officer(s)?
- Contact information is always available on the agency’s website.
- If you used Pivot to find the RFP, the Pivot record will include contact information.
- Sometimes a program will have three or four program officers listed as contacts. In these instances send your message to one of the program officers and copy the others so they are all aware of the project you are considering.

Email the program officer(s):
- Keep it short: provide a couple of paragraphs explaining who you are and what you want to do in your research project.
- Ask whether this project idea is something the program would consider funding.
- Request a follow-up telephone call and schedule a date and time.

Prior to calling the program officer:
- Organize your thoughts by preparing a written abstract which includes
  - the objectives of the project
  - the proposed research methods
  - the expected timeline
  - any special aspects of the project such as using undergraduates in the research
- Prepare the questions you want to ask

Telephone Call:
- Ask questions and seek advice.
- Listen carefully and objectively to the answers and key points emphasized in the discussion.
- REMEMBER: A SUGGESTION FROM A PROGRAM OFFICER IS ACTUALLY AN INSTRUCTION.