Writing for the GPA Journal
David Lindeman and Andy Rawdon, Co-Editors

We are delighted to report that the 2014 Journal of the Grant Professionals Association (JGPA) will be unveiled next month at the national conference in Portland! This year’s edition of GPA’s annual research journal presents a rich variety of perspectives on our growing and ever-changing profession. Ten authors were selected to publish articles in the journal, following a process that involved many anonymous peer reviewers from the GPA community. We extend many thanks to all who contributed their time and expertise.

As we begin our second year of serving as your JGPA co-editors, we invite you to consider becoming an author for the 2015 edition. We welcome your ideas for articles that address new ideas in our field, contribute research-based information, provide a case study or best practices, and examine any of the GPCI competencies and skills.

Writing for a research journal presents exciting opportunities for grant professionals and it can also be a new experience for many. We received feedback from several past authors who reflected on their experience along the path from an idea to a final published work.

Identifying an Idea
The first step is coming up with and proposing an article idea--a 300-word summary by email that we review before inviting a full submission. This limits your investment and ensures that articles invited for submission are relevant to the JGPA mission and purpose.

Authors report many reasons for deciding to submit a proposal. Many say that they already had a research idea in mind from work they were currently doing or had recently done--in some cases, for a dissertation or other academic research. Others report discussing a mutual interest area with colleagues and ultimately deciding to work together on an article idea.

Several cited professional development reasons and training to do their jobs better. Timothy P. Hooper, MPA, GPC (Tennessee State University) said, “My primary job is to help faculty prepare and submit grants, but I frequently get asked to review their manuscripts too. I wanted to have first-hand knowledge of the process so I’d be in a better position to help faculty in this area too.”

Authors also point to professional advancement reasons: the opportunity to become published, increased marketability, and opportunities for promotion (especially in academia).

As your co-editors, we are always interested to hear your ideas about potential articles or topics that you may be thinking about proposing, even before you formally submit a proposal. We work closely with Susan Perri, MPA, who serves as the journal’s acquisitions manager. Please contact any of us at journal@grantprofessionals.org!

Writing Your Article
After your proposal is submitted, we will respond with feedback on your article idea and, if appropriate, invite you to submit a full manuscript. Full articles usually range from 2,000 to 4,500 words (3,000 to 4,000 words on average).

Most authors report that it takes about 4 to 6 weeks to outline, draft, and write an article from start to finish, working on it for a couple of hours from time to time along with other commitments. A couple of authors noted that the data collection and analysis underlying their article had been collected over a period of years, so the writing of the article consisted of synthesizing information from that earlier effort.

**After the Submission**

Once a full manuscript is submitted, it is assigned to several peer reviewers to evaluate and score the proposal. The peer review process is double-blind: reviewers do not receive any information about authors’ identities, and the authors do not know who the peer reviewers are who are assigned to their article. The peer review process generally lasts about 6 to 8 weeks.

Each author will receive anonymous versions of peer reviewers’ comments, as well as a general summary from a co-editor. Articles that are selected for publication then proceed through several rounds of revisions and editing. Articles which are not accepted are returned to the author with comments and suggestions from the reviewers; we often encourage authors to revise and resubmit for a future journal edition.

Accepted manuscripts generally undergo three to four rounds of editing. We will ask the author to revise the article based on common responses in peer reviewers’ comments. As co-editors, we both review and edit each article. Near the end of the process, an external professional copyeditor conducts final editing and proofreading and lays out the final version of the publication.

**Publication!**

The *JGPA* is published in both print and electronic versions once per year, usually in October or November. Following the publication, authors report a variety of positive outcomes resulting from their published article: new contacts and referrals, speaking and lecturing opportunities, and professional advancement opportunities.

Linda Gatten Butler, MSW, ACSW, LISWS (Butler Consulting) reports several professional outcomes, including new contacts, referrals for her consulting business, training opportunities, requests from other sources for additional articles, and finally, the “courage to become a coauthor for books.”

Another author indicated that in his dissertation defense, he was able to indicate that his work had already been published. An author reported that the publication helped to secure invitations to present at conferences by increasing his credibility, as the proposed lecture topic had already been published in a peer-reviewed journal.

Another author indicated that the publication helped secure opportunities to serve as a
federal grant reviewer. An author indicated that the publication probably had a significant role in the committee’s decision to recommend her promotion.

Authors also indicate that they are able to use the article as a teaching and training tool. For example, Tim Hooper reports that “I actually use my JGPA article as a teaching tool. I’ve used this in training workshops, small-group training, and one-on-one consultations.”

**Final Advice**
Past authors are unanimous in their advice to people thinking about writing for the *JGPA*. In the words of Linda Butler: “Go for it!”

Tim Hooper agrees: “If you are thinking about submitting an article, give it a shot. What’s the worst thing that can happen? ‘No.’ I don’t think this is uncommon territory for grant professionals….If you’ve got something interesting to share with others, then do please share!”

Similarly, another author suggests that grant professionals use the same approach as for writing a proposal to a grantmaker: write a clear, persuasive narrative with convincing data and backup. An author also suggested sharing a draft with someone who has written a research article before, to ensure that the draft makes sense to a first-time reader. And, as with a grant proposal, authors suggest that if you don’t succeed the first time, listen to the explanation and try again.

As your co-editors, we look forward to discussing ideas with you. We will be at the national conference in Portland and are happy to talk with any prospective authors. We can be reached anytime at journal@grantprofessionals.org and full JGPA guidelines are posted on the GPA website (www.grantprofessionals.org).

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