In a recent article in *Nature News*, the “fight for funding” was voted as the biggest challenge faced by early career scientists. It also reports that many early career scientists have considered quitting their research career due to immense pressure to establish a successful research program. As new faculty members, many of us might have gone through similar situations. Some may be lucky to inherit a successful, established research program, but many will face the challenge of building a research program from scratch or with limited available resources. Whatever might be the case, there are some strategies that early career faculty can follow to assist them in developing a successful research program.

**How Do I Find Funding?**

It is important to be aware of all the potential funding opportunities out there. So, be ready to spend the first few months in your new position exploring different types of funding avenues ranging from federal organizations to industries and local commodity groups. All these agencies have funding opportunities available that vary in size and scope. It is up to you to actively seek them. It is important to thoroughly read the Request for Applications (RFA). Sometimes, these RFAs could be lengthy; however, a thorough reading can help you understand not only of the funding agencies and their programs, but guidelines for proposal preparation. Sometimes, organize grant-writing workshops targeting specific agencies such as the National Science Foundation or the National Institute for Food and Agriculture. There are also sessions organized by the Early Career Members Committee as part of the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meeting. Take time to attend these workshops in your career. Remember, you can have the best idea in the world, but if you do a poor job of proposal preparation, then you may not get the results you were expecting.

As the lead principal investigator, you will write the major portion of the proposal. You prepare the first draft of the proposal early so that you can obtain input and improvements from your collaborators in a timely manner. It is important to have a good draft as it helps the collaborators to streamline their thoughts in writing their sections. Once you have a full proposal draft ready, ask your collaborators to critically read it again like a proposal reviewer might do. You can also ask your friends or mentors to provide critical input. Revise it accordingly. All of this takes time, so an early start is important. Once you start writing proposals and invite other colleagues to join your effort, many will understand your program better and may invite you to participate in their proposals, which will also increase your chances of getting funding.

**Don’t Panic If You Don’t Publish in the First Year**

When I started my career, I was bombarded by the phrase “publish or perish” from all corners. In a sense, it is important to have an adequate number of publications to support the success of our program and tenure and promotion depends on having an adequate number of publications. What were my options when I just started my job? I could have tried publishing papers using data that were collected when I was a postdoctoral research associate, or I could have written a review paper, but for me, all those options were taking time away from my pursuit of funding and starting my research program. So, I spent this early time meeting people, developing collaborations, collecting data, and planning my research program. I will spend time developing strong proposals and working with my collaborators, which will increase my chances of getting funded.