Larson Policy on Applications, Letters, and Research Presentations

Every time you mention your work in passing, write applications for awards, or present your work, you are representing yourself as a scientist, my mentoring ability, and the quality of science our lab does as a whole. So, I want you to always try to put your best self forward regardless of the venue! Fortunately for you, I can, expect, and at times require myself to help you in honing this skill just like any other scientific skill.

When considering formal applications that include your scientific work, i.e, those for awards, presentations, conferences, etc., I absolutely must approve your application. My approval is necessary and useful on several levels. The first, on most basic level, the work is being done in my lab, with money associated with my name, and under my supervision. Therefore, I am accountable, and so I want to know what you are putting out to the scientific and broader. Often the letters of reference associated with such applications need to speak to your abilities to do what you are proposing, and so I absolutely need to understand your proposal before I can write a good letter. On a deeper level, I want you to succeed, and the best way for you to succeed at getting awards, presentations, etc. is for me to be highly involved in the process so I can share my expertise and experiences with you. Never feel like you are being a burden on me for applications. I very much believe that your success is my success and the lab's success.

Generally, relatively small grant applications will require about three solid weeks of work, assuming I have free time to edit immediately. If my schedule is busy, then probably add a week or two more. The best practice is to let me know you are thinking of applying to something with the deadline and information and I'll give you an estimate of the amount of lead time we'll need for creating a great product. For larger grant applications, the process can take months and so we definitely need to discuss and plan accordingly.

One final note, as I said, your success is the lab's success, and so all lab members should feel comfortable asking and providing each other help and edits. The most important skill to learn as a scientist is how to access, evaluate, and utilize resources efficiently and effectively. This holds true while writing applications and writing in general.