

## Tips on Writing a Grant Proposal

A successful grant proposal is one that is thoughtfully planned, well prepared, and concisely packaged. There are eight basic components in a solid proposal package:

**1. Proposal Summary.** The proposal summary appears at the beginning of the proposal and outlines the project. It can be a cover letter or a separate page. It should be brief: no longer than two or three paragraphs. It is often helpful to prepare the summary after the proposal has been developed. This makes it easier to include all the key points necessary to communicate the objectives of the project. The summary document becomes the foundation of the proposal. The first impression it gives will be critical to the success of the venture. It very possibly could be the only part of the package that is carefully reviewed before the decision is made to consider the project further.

**2. Introduction of the Organization.** Most proposals require a description of an applicant's organization and its past, present, and projected operations. Be concise, specific and compelling. Use the description to build credibility for your organization. (Start a "credibility" file.) Reinforce the connection between you and the grantor. Establish a context for your problem statement. IN BRIEF: Who, what, when, why, and how much!

Some features to consider: A brief biography of board members and key staff members, the organization's goals, philosophy, and record with other grantors, any success stories. The data should be relevant to the goals of the granting organization and its grant program, and should establish the applicant's credibility.

**3. Problem Statement:** The problem statement (or needs assessment) is a key element of a proposal. It should be a clear, concise, well-supported statement of the problem to be overcome using the grant funding. An applicant could include data collected during a needs assessment that would illustrate the problems to be addressed. The information provided should be both factual and directly related to the problem addressed by the proposal.

- Zero in on a specific problem you want to solve or an issue you want to address
- Use statistics to support the existence of your problem or issue
- Make a connection between the issue and your organization
- Make a case for your project on local and national level
- Demonstrate your knowledge of the issue or problem
- Set-up the milestones of your goals and objectives
- Address the outcomes you wish to achieve

**4. Project Objectives:** The project objectives should clearly describe the goals of the project. Applicants should explain the expected results and benefits of each objective. They should also list the specific criteria of the grant program. Then, describe how the proposal meets each criterion. Goals are general and offer the evaluator an understanding of the scope of your program. Objectives are specific, measurable outcomes. They should be realistic and attainable. Objectives help solve the problem or address the issue. If your objectives make reference to a number -- make sure it is do-able. Do not confuse objectives with methods. Always be realistic.

**5. Project Methods or Design:** The project method outlines the tasks that will be accomplished with the available resources. It is helpful to structure the project method as a timeline. Early in the planning process, applicants should list the tasks that will have to be completed to meet the goals of the project.

They can then break these into smaller tasks and lay them out in a schedule over the grant time period. This will provide a chance to consider what personnel, materials, and other resources will be needed to carry out the tasks.

Describe in detail the activities that will take place in order to achieve desired results. Make sure your methods are realistic. Describe WHY you have chosen these activities. Justify them over all other approaches your organization could have taken. Show your knowledge of the bigger picture. Include a timetable of major milestones.

**6. Project Evaluation.** Applicants should develop evaluation criteria to evaluate progress towards project goals. It is important to define carefully and exactly how success will be determined. Applicants should ask themselves what they expect to be different once the project is complete. If you are having a problem developing your evaluation process, you better take another look at your objectives. Be ready to begin evaluation as you begin your project.

Summative and Formative Evaluation: Summative Evaluation is a plan to evaluate the project that measures how you will have met your objectives. Did you work with 45 students/adults, two times a week for 12 weeks, etc.? Formative Evaluation is a plan to evaluate the project during and after its execution. It can be used as a tool to make appropriate changes along the way. For example, student surveys and questionnaires.

**7. Future Funding.** Applicants may be asked to list expected sources of continuing funding after the conclusion of the grant. The applicant may also be required to list other sources and amounts of funding obtained for the project.

**8. The Proposal Budget.** Funding sources require different amounts of detail in the budget. Be specific, in order to avoid confusion. If the funding source requires a specific format, you must provide a budget in that format.

Careful planning will decrease the number of changes that may be required once your program is operating. Also, careful planning shows honesty. This honesty will be necessary to get permission for future changes.

**9. Appendices.** Resumes show qualifications, work ethic and commitment. They can be a few paragraphs, and should list other grants you have managed.

Letters of Support or Endorsement are DIFFERENT, so determine which one the project calls for. A Letter of Support implies partners, so make sure that they are included in the description and budget. Keep endorsement to a minimum. All letters should be sent to you, the applicant, and included in the proposal's addendum. Do not have them sent separately to the funder.