

GRANTS WORKSHOP

HOW TO WRITE A GRANT PROPOSAL A STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH

1. Conduct a Pre-Writing Check
2. Different Kinds of Grant Proposals
3. Make an Outline
4. General Things to Remember While Writing
5. Usual Parts of A Grant Proposal
 - A. Summary/Abstract
 - B. Introduction
 - C. Needs Assessment (Problem Statement)
 - D. Objectives
 - E. Methods (Procedures/Activities)
 - F. Evaluation
 - G. Sustainability
 - H. Budget
6. Final Check

1. **CONDUCT A PRE-WRITING CHECK**

- ✓ You have a SPECIFIC SOURCE for which you are writing this proposal.
- ✓ You have the most recent guidelines and forms (and any other available data such as past grantee lists and project descriptions, sample proposals, reviewer's evaluation form, etc.) from the funding agency.
- ✓ Your overall project idea matches the specific guidelines.
- ✓ You can meet the deadline date with a quality proposal.
- ✓ You have the support needed from your organization to pursue this grant.
- ✓ You have talked to all the people who will be involved with or impacted by this grant.
- ✓ You have done some preliminary research and are satisfied that your idea is worth pursuing.
- ✓ You have read through the specific guidelines thoroughly...not once, but twice!
- ✓ You have contacted the funding agency to discuss your idea, clarify the guidelines, ask questions, etc. and have received a favorable response.

2. **DIFFERENT TYPES OF GRANT PROPOSALS**

- A. Grant Applications
 - Mostly Forms, Very Little Narrative
 - Allocations

- B. Letter Proposals
 - Foundations
 - Corporations

- C. Preliminary Proposals/Letters of Intent
 - Brief (usually 5 pages or less)
 - Used as a screening process
 - “Concept papers”
 - May be required or simply encouraged

- D. Full Grant Proposals
 - Often lengthy
 - Written to specific guidelines
 - Usually a combination of forms, narrative and budget

3. **MAKE AN OUTLINE (FROM THE AGENCY’S SPECIFIC GUIDELINES) OF EVERYTHING THIS PROPOSAL MUST CONTAIN**

- Guidelines always differ. You must follow the agency’s specific guidelines for this specific grant program.

- Decide WHO will provide the “rough draft” (or data) for each part.

- Decide WHEN it will be provided (at least 3 weeks prior to deadline date).

- Name ONE person who will pull all the parts (data) together into one cohesive proposal. (Committees can’t write grant proposals).

HINTS:

- Begin with or request those items that will take the most time (support letters, updated resumes, biographical sketches, etc.)
- Get signatures ahead of time if you can (to avoid last-minute crises). Look at the scoring sheet and spend the most time and energy on those parts resulting in the most points
- Always attach what is requested, even if you don't have it—attach a “justification” or “reasonable facsimile thereof.”

4. **GENERAL THINGS TO REMEMBER WHILE WRITING**

- Clear, compelling, concise writing
- No jargon or “academic” writing (unless it's a research proposal)
- Deal in specifics, not abstracts (dates, numbers, percentages, etc.)
- Use local/regional data more than national
- Repeating is ok...Repeating is ok...
- Throw their words back at them at every available opportunity
- Use headings, charts, listing with bullets, underlining, etc. (Break up that long narrative!)
- Don't forget about paragraphing (keep those central ideas together)

- Use a persuasive writing style:
- X **NO** *“The project hopes to conduct energy audits for needy families in our local area.”*
 - ✓ **YES** “The project will conduct in-home energy audits for 100 low- income families in Washington County by September 2017”.
- Only use data and statistics that support your cause. If you must include a fact that appears to undercut your case, turn it into a positive:
- X **NO** “There are 5 other day care centers in Fayette County currently serving handicapped children.”
 - ✓ **YES** “Although there are a few day care centers in Fayette County attempting to serve handicapped children, none are currently mainstreaming these children with children who do not have disabilities and none provide the kind of comprehensive services proposed by this project...”

*****Never lose sight of the specific grant program’s priorities and make sure they are woven into your narrative.**

- Write in the third person (it’s easier to brag)
 - X **NO** “I am a leader in the field of academic internships...”
 - ✓ **YES** “The project director is a leader in the field of academic internships...”
- Accentuate the positive—emphasize “opportunities” rather than “needs”
 - X **NO** “We need funds to help all these financially needy students find internships.”
 - ✓ **YES** “We need funds to build an employer network of internships for the mutual benefit of regional employers and university students.”
- Don’t try for perfection on your first draft. Get down your ideas, then edit and rewrite.

ALWAYS FOLLOW WHATEVER INSTRUCTIONS ARE GIVEN BY THE SPECIFIC AGENCY GUIDELINES. THIS TAKES PRECEDENCE OVER ANYTHING ELSE.

5. USUAL PARTS FOUND IN GRANT PROPOSALS

A. SUMMARY (Abstract, Synopsis)

- Always write this last
 - Should be able to stand alone
 - Gives clear description of the WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE, WHY and HOW of your project
 - Stress the outcomes
 - Adhere to word (or character) restrictions
 - Take care in choosing a project title
 - Descriptive, yet brief
 - Suggest the results you hope to achieve rather than what you plan to do
- X **NO** “A proposal for Microcomputers for Central College”
- ✓ **YES** “Improving Math Skills of Central College Students through Computer Assisted Instruction”

WHO????

B. INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND, APPLICATION, ORGANIZATION)

- Boilerplate
- Describe your organization, its mission/purpose, whom it serves, major accomplishments, etc.)
- Give general information regarding location, size, staffing, governance, etc.
- Don't be afraid to play up things like depressed economic area, etc.
- Establish your agency's qualifications and “credibility.”
- Why should your agency be the one to run such a project? What makes you unique?
- What is your track record in this area?
- Who has funded you previously for similar projects?
- Should be brief and lead logically to the needs assessment
- Caution: Don't make yourself sound too good—if you are already doing all these things, why do you need them and their money?

WHAT???

C. NEEDS ASSESSMENT (PROBLEM STATEMENT, RATIONALE)

- Convincingly answer the question: Why is this specific project necessary?
- Use as much concrete data, support statistics, statement from authorities, etc., you can find
- Conduct specific surveys (formal or informal as time allows)
- Go to your “customers” to help assess need
- Use national data, but concentrate on your region or locality...after all, your project won’t be serving the whole nation.
- Why aren’t others now meeting this need?
- Conduct literature/internet searches (particularly for research projects) to show that what you want to do hasn’t already been done. (Don’t assume that just because you and a few colleagues think that it is innovative, that it is.) Check it out thoroughly.
- Advisory councils can assist in validating need and showing broad-based support.
- Show this granting agency why it is the best source of support for this problem.

**Most agencies allocate a good many points to the need section when scoring a proposal.

WHAT? WHEN? WHERE?

D. OBJECTIVES (PROJECT GOALS)

- Must be specific, measurable and verifiable.
- Objectives should describe the project’s outcomes, not the process or method (specifies a result, not an activity).
- Starts with “To” followed by a verb
- Tells WHEN the result is to be accomplished.
- Should be realistic, but not overly conservative (allow for “stretch”).

X **NO** To hire 2 new staff to provide in-home nursing services to low-income persons

✓ **YES** To increase in-home nursing services to low-income persons in Washington County such that 20% more clients are served by June 2018.

X **NO** *To conduct a survey of rural communities about their educational needs*

✓ **YES** To determine the four leading education needs of rural citizens in Greene County by September 2017.

X **NO** *To offer a short-term training program on AIDS issues to professional healthcare workers.*

✓ **YES** To decrease AIDS misconceptions by 80% in 50 local professional healthcare workers through a three-week training program on AIDS issues by December 2017.

X **NO** *To hire tutors to help sixth graders with math skills.*

✓ **YES** To increase the math scores of sixth graders at Brown Elementary on the John Doe Standard Math Test by 4 percentage points by October 2016.

HOW? WHEN? WHERE? WHO?

E. **METHODS (PROCEDURES, ACTIVITIES, WORK PLAN)**

- Describe the activities you will conduct to achieve the objectives and why you selected them (How will clients be selected, how will program publicity be handled, what workshops will be held, where will the training occur, etc. For research proposals, this is the “methodology” section.)
- Make sure the order of your activities make sense.

- Include information on staff, facilities, administration, etc. (if not requested elsewhere in proposal).
- Anything listed in the budget (travel, personnel, equipment, etc.) should be reflected in the activities.
- Give a time chart, task chart, or similar breakdown of what, when and who (monthly is the “norm” for a year-long project).
- Activities: Reasonable? Innovative? Accomplishable? (Given the time and money allotted?)

DID YOUR PROJECT SUCCEED?

F. EVALUATION (EVALUATIVE CRITERIA, OUTCOMES, MEASUREMENTS)

- How will you know if your project succeeded or failed?
- Describe how each objective and each activity will be evaluated or documented (*If you wrote measurable objectives, this will be easy*).

G. CONTINUATION/SUSTAINABILITY

Funders want to see that the project will continue after the funds run out. Will it produce program income? What is the commitment of appropriate entities to provide ongoing support? Will the project be incorporated into an ongoing program of the organization?

IS THE PROPOSED BUDGET ALLOWABLE AND IN KEEPING WITH REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) GUIDELINES AND UNIVERSITY POLICIES?

H. DEVELOPING A GRANT BUDGET

- Is your budget reasonable, appropriate, and allowable?
- Is the budget sufficient to perform all activities in the scope of work?
- Locate the budget guidelines and format in the RFP
- Always budget with whole dollars
- Be aware that expenses are allowed unless the RFP prohibits (Must align with OMB Circular A-21, Cost Principles for Educational Institutions)

- A typical budget has the following line items:
 - A. Personnel (Salary and Fringes)
 - B. Equipment (Nonexpendable property over \$5,000 with a useful life of more than one year)
 - C. Participants
 - D. Subcontracts
 - E. Supplies
 - F. Travel
 - G. Other Expenses (publications, printing, postage, maintenance agreements)
 - H. Cost Share or Match Indirect Costs

*Notes: Whether or not required, you should be prepared to be able to do a budget narrative for each line item, as well as a budget summary

6. **FINAL CHECK**

- Once you have a potential funding source, read and re-read the guidelines
- Figure out if this is a direction you and your department should go.
- Pick 4 or 5 creative, innovative people (possibility thinkers) and brainstorm.

**Keep in mind as you design your project, cooperative efforts, partnerships, and advisory councils are looked on favorably—it strengthens your proposal.

- Work things to fit their guidelines. Don't give up if you hit a snag. Say their guidelines want a 50% match—maybe you can do an in-kind personnel match.
- Maybe you see money that you want to go after but you don't fit the criteria— perhaps you can have another organization apply and subcontract to you.
- Settle on the basic elements of your project
- Contact the agency only after you have nailed down the basic elements. Then you will be informed and persuasive when you discuss.
- Outline the format from the guidelines and write in key phrases, data sources, etc., for your project. Funders want you and your project to make their job easier and make them look good. A strong proposal from you helps them too.

PROPOSAL ELEMENTS CHECKLIST— EXAMPLE

	Name	By
1. Cover Letter Signed by Authorized Official	_____	_____
2. Signature Page (project partners)	_____	_____
3. Narrative		
Brief Organizational History	_____	_____
Description of the Project	_____	_____
Needs/Problems to be Addressed	_____	_____
Target Population	_____	_____
Other Organizations, Partners, or Funders	_____	_____
4. Outcomes (Performance Measures)	_____	_____
5. Plan to meet Goals and Objectives	_____	_____
6. Implementation Schedule	_____	_____
7. Sustainability Plan	_____	_____
8. Evaluation	_____	_____
9. Project Budget/Budget Narrative	_____	_____
10. Support letter	_____	_____