

Basic Principles of Grant Writing

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A stylized silhouette of a mountain range in shades of teal, located in the bottom right corner of the slide.

Good Proposal = Good Idea + Good Plan

Do you know....

- ◆ What you want to do and why you want to do it?
- ◆ If it will work?
- ◆ If you can do?
- ◆ If it matters to anybody else?

Can you communicate...

- ◆ Why this project is needed and what you want to accomplish?
- ◆ Who will carry out the project?
- ◆ How much will it cost?

Request for Proposal

- ◆ Read carefully and follow directions to the letter
- ◆ Don't miss deadlines for letter of intent and proposal submission
- ◆ Always attend bidders conferences if offered
- ◆ Begin first by creating an outline based on the RFP

Agency Protocols

- ◆ Who can commit to conduct project?
- ◆ Who is authorized to approve budget?
- ◆ Who else gets involved?
- ◆ What happens if you get funded?
- ◆ Can you REALLY do what you are proposing?

Essential Components of a Good Proposal

- ◆ Cover sheet and Table of Contents
- ◆ Summary
- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Program Narrative, including:
 - Problem Statement/Needs Assessment
 - Objectives
 - Methods / Workplan
 - Evaluation
- ◆ Future/Other Funding
- ◆ Budget and Budget Justification
- ◆ Letters of Support and/or Commitment

Grant Proposal – Components

- ◆ Cover Sheet
 - Federal 424 Form
 - State
 - Make your own if appropriate
- ◆ Table of Contents
 - This is the last thing you will do before you sign the document

This RFP has a required cover sheet you must use!

(Executive) Summary

Clearly and concisely summarizes the request.

- ◆ Appears at beginning of proposal; written last.
- ◆ Identifies the applicant; sentence about credibility
- ◆ Includes at least one sentence on problem, objectives, methods.
- ◆ Includes total cost, funds already obtained, and amount requested in this proposal
- ◆ Is brief (2-3 paragraphs is best!), clear and interesting.

Program Narrative: Lead Agency Description

Describes applicant's qualifications or credibility or background

- ◆ Who are you: the agency and the individuals
- ◆ Applicant agency purpose, programs, constituents
- ◆ Evidence of past work and accomplishments
- ◆ Evidence of ability: knowledge of the field
- ◆ Leads logically to the problem statement
- ◆ Brief, interesting and free of jargon

What about your organization?

- ◆ What do people think about the organization/institution where you work?
- ◆ What do funders think about the organization/institution where you work?
- ◆ Boilerplate – file and save

More Lead Agency Description

- ◆ What is organization's mission?
- ◆ How is organization positioned in community and what is its heritage?
- ◆ How does it benefit the community?
- ◆ How and who does it serve?
- ◆ Is the organization fiscally sound?
- ◆ Does the organization have strong leadership?
- ◆ What community partners are involved?

Program Narrative: Community To Be Served

- ◆ Community description, including geography, demographics
- ◆ Community readiness
- ◆ Description of problem and need – why the funding is necessary

Program Narrative: Community Need

Need: Gap between what a situation is and what it should be.

Collect information about:

- ◆ The problem to be addressed
- ◆ Current programs addressing the issue, its successes and challenges
- ◆ Current policies and needed policies

Community Need

- ◆ Do you have local or county statistics to add to the Background provided?
- ◆ Can the reviewer get a picture of your community and its needs from your proposal?
- ◆ What statistics can you provide to show community readiness?

Problem Statement or Needs Assessment

Documentation of needs to be met or problems to be solved

- ◆ Relates to purpose of applicant agency
- ◆ Reasonable dimensions – not save the world
- ◆ Supported by data, authorities, clients
- ◆ Client's needs vs. applicant's needs
- ◆ Not "lack of program"
- ◆ Factual, specific, brief, compelling case
- ◆ Jargon-free and interesting to read

Numbers that Get Noticed

- ◆ Seek the strongest statistics
- ◆ Showcase the statistics
- ◆ Make the numbers noticeable

Problem Statement

- ◆ Define the problem in terms of conditions and behaviors, rather than solutions
- ◆ Define the problem in terms of environmental conditions and behaviors that affect it; avoid assigning blame
- ◆ Write preliminary statement that everyone can agree on, such as “Male tobacco users in our community are not using the Quitline.””

Program Objectives

Establish measurable benefits of funding

- ◆ At least one objective per problem or need
- ◆ Outcomes, not methods
- ◆ States how those served will benefit
- ◆ States time by which change will occur
- ◆ Should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART).

What about Process Objectives?

- ◆ Process objectives = tasks to be completed over course of project
- ◆ Relates to methods, but NOT the same as methods – focus on results

Linking Outcome, Impact and Process Objectives

- ◆ Outcome: By 2010, CVH mortality among men will be reduced by 5%, as measured by annual vital statistics.
- ◆ Impact: By 2010, tobacco use among men will be reduced by 30%, as measured by annual BRFSS.
- ◆ Process: By 2010, use of Quitline among men will be increased by 75%, as measured by Quitline statistics.

Project Action Plan

- ◆ Goal
- ◆ Objective
- ◆ Projects
 - By dates
 - Key Activities
 - Milestones
 - Who will do what – Responsible staff – volunteer, organization

Methods

Activities to be employed to achieve results

- ◆ Flow from problems and objectives
- ◆ Clearly describes program activities
- ◆ States reasons for selection of activities
- ◆ Describes sequencing, staffing and level of effort.

Linking Objectives & Methods

- ◆ Outcome: Reduce CVH mortality
- ◆ Impact: Reduce tobacco use
- ◆ Process: Increase use of Quitline
- ◆ Methods:
 - Conduct professional education programs
 - Conduct media campaign
 - Provide marketing materials to appropriate venues

Evaluation

Plan for determining degree to which objectives are met and methods are followed:

- ◆ Plan to measure progress toward objectives
- ◆ Plan for evaluating & modifying methods
- ◆ Criteria for success & how data collected
- ◆ Test instruments, data analysis explained
- ◆ Evaluation reports to be produced

Checking Proposal Continuity: Each component of proposal should be related logically to other components.

Problem(s)	Objective(s)	Method(s)	Evaluation
<p>Proliferation of weeds resulting from a recent irrigation project has reduced sugar beet yield in the affected area by 50 percent; farmers' control costs are \$75 per acre. An experimental weed seed screen is available, but its cost effectiveness has not been tested.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To increase sugar beet yield in one-half of the acreage by 25 percent per acre. 2. To reduce weed control costs in one-half of the acreage by 50 percent or \$37.50 per acre. 3. To determine the cost effectiveness of the weed seed screens. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce weed seed screens into one-half of the irrigated acreage in the affected area. 2. Same as above. 3. Take weed counts and assess weeding costs in screened and non-screened acreage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Compare harvested sugar beets in screened acreage vs. previous yield vs. unscreened acreage. 2. Compare weed control costs in screened acreage vs. previous costs vs. unscreened acreage costs. 3. Combine 1 & 2 above and compare costs of purchasing, installing and maintaining screens with costs of conventional weeding practices on a per acre basis.

Sustainability Plan

- ◆ Plan for continuation beyond grant period.
- ◆ Realistic plan for future funding if program is to be continued

Other Funding

- ◆ Availability of other resources needed.
- ◆ How other funds will be obtained if needed to implement the grant
- ◆ Accompanied by letters of commitment

Letters of Support

- ◆ Endorsement - not same as commitment
- ◆ Limit the number (5)
- ◆ Knowledgeable of your work, appreciative of this project
- ◆ Address to agency head, not to whom it may concern
- ◆ Don't say: in response to your request for letter
- ◆ Purpose: broad community support

Effective Letters of Commitment

- ◆ WHO: Person or agency promising tangible service or asset
- ◆ WHAT: One-page letter typed on letterhead, specifying what will be contributed or provided
- ◆ WHY: Demonstrate local financial support for project
- ◆ WHEN: As soon as methods are outlined
- ◆ WHERE: Appendix

Project Budget

- ◆ Personnel
- ◆ Fringe Benefits
- ◆ Travel
- ◆ Equipment
- ◆ Supplies
- ◆ Contractual
- ◆ Other
- ◆ Total

Budget

Costs to be met by the funding source and those to be provided by applicant or others

- ◆ Use required form if directed (Yes in this case)
- ◆ Same story as program narrative: no surprises
- ◆ Specific & detailed: includes all items asked of the funding source
- ◆ Include other income or in-kind services, and budget narrative/ justification

BUDGET

- ◆ **B**ased on the plan described in application
- ◆ **U**ndergoes thorough review by all parties
- ◆ **D**etails the cost of each item
- ◆ **G**ives reviewers adequate information
- ◆ **E**asy to follow
- ◆ **T**akes care of all funding needs (or explains why not)

Budget Narrative

- ◆ Vitally important so the reviewer can really understand how you and the community will support your grant.
- ◆ All sections must have an explanation that anyone who is totally unfamiliar with you and your organization can understand.

Budget: Matching Funds

- ◆ Monetary contribution to assist with conduct of project:
 - Required amount of non-grant resources that will be spent on this project
 - Required at a specific level (e.g., 10%, 3:1 – for this RFP, it's **25%**)
 - Sometimes must be cash, but not always (Yours may be from a variety of other sources)
 - Must be documented in financial reports

Budget: Matching Funds, cont.

- ◆ How to find funds for matching?
 - Probably no “pot” of money for matching
 - Talk to your partner organizations
 - Talk to funding source to determine flexibility
 - Talk to your budget person
 - ◆ Can't use federal funds
 - ◆ Can't match the same money twice
 - ◆ Can't pretend to have matching funds

Additional Components For a Better Proposal

- ◆ Cover Letter
 - Letterhead stationery
 - Signature by high authority
- ◆ Table of Contents
 - Outline organization of proposal
 - Number the pages!

Additional Components For a Better Proposal, cont.

◆ Appendices

- Letters of support/commitment
- Publications by/about your agency
- Detailed info/data not in text
- Resumes/qualifications of project staff
- Admin/organizational location of project

** Remember definition of an appendix!

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Avoid unsupported assumptions:
Don't ...
 - assume funding source knows all about you and your agency.
 - say “we believe” or “it is thought” – give supporting evidence/documentation
 - describe national scope of problem without documenting it in community served

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Pay attention to details: Do ...
 - Be sure your topic is appropriate for support
 - Be specific about purpose, products, past work
 - Be reasonable: budget ~ work proposed
 - Include letters of commitment for promises made by others

Ways to Improve Your Chances

Make your proposal meet the funder's needs

- Project benefit to many people
- Display novel approach, cutting-edge
- Collaborate!
- Include target population
- Make your own investment
- Demonstrate replicability
- Promise to disseminate information
- Demonstrate life after the grant

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Be sure proposal is neat, clean, easy to read:
 - No typographical errors
 - Original, plus number of copies requested (2 additional for this RFP)
 - Don't use extravagant packaging
 - Avoid footnotes; give separate reference list
 - Use 12-point, Times New Roman
 - Make important parts stand out
 - Organize document so it flows (appendix)

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Improve your writing skills: Do's and Don'ts
 - Don't use a committee for writing
 - Don't be afraid to personalize
 - Don't use contractions or sexist language
 - Do aim your pitch at one individual
 - Do avoid technical language, acronyms, abbreviations
 - Do select title of 10 or less words; don't be cute
 - Do be consistent in style and format
 - Do keep it short and simple; less than page limit

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Don't junk the English language
 - Avoid problem words and phrases
 - Avoid bad connections
 - Avoid obese prepositions
 - Avoid useless cabooses
 - Don't take the roundabout way

Ways to Improve Your Chances

- ◆ Develop a grants-writing dream team
 - Team leader
 - Skilled writer
 - Budget developer
 - Literature researcher
 - Program experts
 - Needs assessment coordinator
 - Word processor
 - Community key informants/consumers
 - Gopher

Where's the Money

- ◆ Federal Government: Major Players
 - NIH
 - HRSA
 - CDC
 - EPA
 - NSF

Where's the Money, cont.

- ◆ Private Foundations
 - State Library
 - ◆ Foundation Center
 - ◆ Foundation Directory
 - County Libraries
 - Internet

Internet

- ◆ Foundation websites
- ◆ Grants writing websites
- ◆ Internet Search Engines

Ten Commandments of Foundation Grant Proposals

- ◆ Be realistic
- ◆ Follow instructions
- ◆ Avoid familiarity
- ◆ Engage key officials
- ◆ Ensure solid proposal
- ◆ Keep trying
- ◆ Don't be overambitious
- ◆ Form collaborations
- ◆ Fulfill all obligations
- ◆ Do your homework

Wrap Up

- ◆ Read instructions and follow them exactly – If they want one inch margins, use one inch margins
- ◆ Be specific
- ◆ Get it in on time or they won't look at it
- ◆ Once funded, **complete all requirements on time** if you want to be re-funded!

Conclusion

There's money out there....

...there's no reason you can't get some of it.

Remember:

Good idea + good plan = good proposal