

Writing a Funding Proposal

Project Proposal Basics

Although each project proposal should be individually tailored to the funder, there are some basic rules that apply to all grant applications. Concerning the overall writing style, let clarity of language, purpose and structure be your guiding principle. Otherwise said, be concise; avoid too much technical jargon and always provide simple definitions of specialised terms; be specific in what you want to achieve and what you request from the funder; structure your proposal logically and present it in a clear and easy-to-read layout.

To help you structure your project proposal, we have compiled a checklist of the basic components it should contain. This list is, however, not exclusive - rather it is a guide. It is very important that you always check with funders what their specific requirements are before packaging and submitting your project proposal.

Here is our checklist that was developed after extensive research of literature and foundation guidelines:

Cover Letter

The cover letter is the first document the funder will read and it is often the basis for either consideration or rejection. The cover letter should state the type of support requested, the goals of the project and how it fits into the guidelines of the funder, the total budget and the names of other funders contributing to the project, if available.

Title Page and Table of Contents

The title page should provide the following details: the title and sub-title of the project, the name and address of the organisation, the date and possibly the name of the funder. The table of contents should provide a simple overview of the different sections of the project proposal, including the correct page numbers.

Executive Summary

The executive summary provides all the key points from the project proposal in one page. Don't underestimate the importance of the executive summary - it is, on many occasions, your major sales document in which you should try to gain the interest and support of the reader. The executive summary should include the following information: name of the project; needs statement; brief project description: goals & objectives, beneficiaries, place and time, project staffing; project budget and funding needs. Information on resources already available, as well as an overview of your organisation's expertise to carry out the project should also be included.

The actual project proposal includes:

- **Needs Statement**
The needs statement should be a concise, yet convincing overview of the needs your organisation wants to address with the project. Describe briefly the overall context - this will help the reader get a more complete picture of the scope of the problem. When outlining the actual problem or needs, use relevant facts, examples from the community or statistics to underpin your statement, but make sure all data is correct.
- **Goals & Objectives**
This section of the project proposal should tell the reader what your organisation will do to address the identified needs. Here, you set your goals and objectives. Goals represent concepts or ideal situations that are not necessarily measurable. Objectives are specific, tangible and measurable outcomes that should be achieved within a specified period of time.
- **Methodology & Timetable**
How & when are the project's objectives going to be achieved? By whom? An answer to these questions should be provided in the Methodology & Timetable section of the proposal. Be very clear, specific and realistic - with regard to the methods, the

timetable and the human resources - as this will help convince the reader of your expertise and credibility.

- **Evaluation**

How are you going to measure your success or failure in reaching the stated objectives? In this section, you should provide an outline of the instruments that will be used for the evaluation, define who will conduct the evaluation and when they will conduct it, and state how the reporting will be done. On many occasions, an advisory committee could be set up from a project's beginning to monitor and guide its development.

- **Budget Summary**

The budget summary states the duration of the project and the total project cost, as well as any already available income.

- **Detailed Budget**

There are different ways to structure a budget - depending on the type of the project as well as on the funder's requirements. However, almost every budget includes the following standard items: personnel; travel/meetings; equipment; overhead costs such as rent, telephone, postage and accounting services; printing and dissemination of project materials. Always check with the funders for any special requirements before finalising your budget.

- **Future Funding Plans**

This section should describe the financial resources you will need to continue the project, once the support requested has ended, and how your organisation will arrive at these resources.

Appended Information

Any meaningful information that helps support your project proposal but does not need to be in the body of the proposal should be included as appendices. This may include: detailed work plans, your latest annual report, statistical reports you refer to in your needs statement, letters of support, an organisational chart and any other documents which help establish your organisation's credibility.

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