

## Guidelines for Writing Effective Funding Proposals

The requirements for a proposal vary from organization to organization. Be sure to familiarize yourself with the specific format called for by the potential funder, and research the organization to ensure that your request fits the organization's range of giving and is for something which the organization actually funds. In other words, know your audience, and tailor your argument to it.

The typical components of a proposal are:

- **COVER LETTER**

Summarize the request in a concise way but do not miniaturize the entire proposal. Address the letter to a specific recipient, using name and title; do *not* omit the salutation, use too informal a salutation (e.g. "Dear Friend"), or use too vague a salutation ("To Whom it May Concern"). Be sure to sign it.

- **APPLICATION FORM** (if applicable)

- **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

- **ABSTRACT** (approx. 250 words)

A summary of the proposal with brief review of the major points in the statement of need, the objectives, procedures, evaluation, total amount of money required, etc.; umbrella statement of your case and what you plan to do. What is your idea? *Stress the end products*. Use lay language, *reasonably comprehensible to the non-specialist*.

*Write this section last*. It is the most important section of the entire document because you will provide the reader of a snapshot of what is to follow in the proposal. Essentially it is a sales document, to convince the reader that the project is worthy of their support.

- **PROBLEM STATEMENT (Statement of Need, Literature Review)** (approx. 2 pages)

A clear and precise statement of the problem to be addressed and the need for solution. Here you should establish significance, relevance, timeliness, generalizability and benefits of the project. Be factual and specific; don't use generalities or emotional terms. Be sure you can/do substantiate all statements in your proposal. It usually includes a synopsis of existing knowledge in the field. Include appropriate statistical data describing the need, *cited in proper format* (e.g. MLA, Chicago, APA, etc.). Avoid circular reasoning (i.e. presenting the absence of your solution as the actual problem itself). Essentially, show that you know your field and what else is being done; do not say your project is unique unless it really is. *If it is unique, demonstrate the reasons*.

- **PROJECT DESCRIPTION** (approx. 3 pages)

The nuts and bolts of the project and how it will be implemented. This includes:

- **GOALS (General Objectives, Solutions)**

General statement, describing in qualitative terms the ultimate end to be achieved at some future but undetermined date: *unquantifiable*.

- **OBJECTIVES (Measurable Objectives, Expected Outcomes, Hypotheses)**

A specific indication of the proposed outcomes of the project stated as objectives, hypotheses and/or questions: *quantifiable*. Flows logically from the identified needs, problems, and goals.

- **SCHEDULE (Project Timeline)**

Details when the objectives will be achieved.

- **METHODOLOGY (Activities, Operating Plans, Action Plan, Strategies, Procedures)**

Description of how the objectives will be met or the hypotheses or questions tested. In non-research projects, usually starts with description of the overall approach before describing details about methodology, participants, organization and timelines. In research projects, usually describes design, population and sample, data and instrumentation, analysis, and time schedule. May end with clear identification of short- and long-term products expected.

- **EVALUATION (Formative and Summary Evaluation, Assessment)**

Statement of how the applicant organization/project and the funding agency will know the project has accomplished its purpose. States purpose of evaluation and type of information to be collected; describes instruments, data collection, analysis and utilization; and tells how results will be reported. Provides evaluative criteria for each objective.

- **FUTURE FUNDING (Continuation, Institutionalization)**

Plans to provide future funding if program/project is to be continued.

- **DISSEMINATION (Transferability, Distribution of Results, Utilization Plan, Replicability)**

Summary of how the final product and findings will be shared with others. Details reports to be given to funding agency.

- **FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT (Resources)**

Description of facilities and equipment required and how these will be provided. Describes unique equipment or facilities that will facilitate the project.

- **PERSONNEL (Administrative Organization)**

Survey of the key personnel who will work on the project, their roles, backgrounds, and credentials. Detail new staff, how many (if any) there will be, what type they will be, and how they will be selected. Include a description of the project's administrative organization. Identify individuals who will serve as consultants, describe their backgrounds, and justify their use. If your group is uniquely qualified to carry out the project, point this out. If you are undertaking something new, give some evidence of why the funder should have confidence in you.

- **BUDGET (approx. 1 page)**

Ask for things you actually need. Do not include items you already have, and do not ask for retroactive funding. Do not hide any costs.

Provide an detailed itemization of the project costs with explanatory notes. This list is usually divided into categories such as personnel, supplies and materials, travel, data processing, facilities or equipment, and indirect costs or administrative services. See a sample online at <http://aresty.rutgers.edu/budgetsample.pdf>

- **CONCLUSION (approx. 2 paragraphs)**

A summary of the proposal's main points.

- **APPENDICES**

Includes relevant materials too lengthy to include in the text, e.g. vitae/résumés for key project personnel, letters of endorsement, documentary material (maps, graphs, charts, bibliographies, etc.).

Some final thoughts: *do not encase your proposal in plastic or binding* as the funder may need to copy it. When sending your proposal, make sure to send the *complete* document including all its components. Use enough postage.

Good luck!