

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Proposal Writing Hints

Preamble

Grant writing varies widely across the disciplines, and research intended for epistemological purposes (philosophy or the arts) rests on very different assumptions than research intended for practical applications (medicine or social policy research). Nonetheless, this handout attempts to provide a general introduction to grant writing across the disciplines. Although some scholars in the humanities and arts may not have thought about their projects in terms of research design, hypotheses, research questions, or results, reviewers and funding agencies expect you to frame your project in these terms. Learning the language of grant writing can be a lucrative endeavor, so give it a try. You may also find that thinking about your project in these terms reveals new aspects of it to you. Writing successful grant applications is a long process that begins with an idea. Although many people think of grant writing as a linear process (from idea to proposal to award), it is a circular process.

Learning Objectives

To equip the student with the vital hints on proposal writing

Learning Outcome

The student should be able to identify key hints of a grant proposal

Discussion on Notes

Nonprofit organizations are not entitled to support –they must earn it. Nonprofit organizations must always demonstrate to funders and/or to the general public, that they are worthy and deserving of support. Your qualifications, volunteer commitment, relationships, mission, vision, accountability, fiscal management, programs, profile, services and overall reputation speak to its credibility and worthiness of funding consideration.

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Successful fundraising is not “magic.” A successful proposal is the result of hard work by people who are committed to the task and prepared to undertake the process from proposal development to reconciliation of funds received.

Proposals are not only about “raising money” but also about “creating friendships.”

Whether you are approaching a funder for the first time or have enjoyed the benefit of a positive relationship and ongoing support, it is important to ensure your funder’s experience with you is constructive and mutually beneficial *every time*. Be careful not to take advantage of personal and professional relationships.

Proposal writing involves “selling” your organization to a potential funder.

As a proposal writer, you must *sell* your organization to a potential funder based on the value of your organization and the value of your proposed project or program. Professional fundraisers know that, to be successful in their profession, they must master the —art of the task. Every experience you have with proposal writing, both successes and failures, will assist you in becoming a more effective advocate for your organization and more successful in obtaining funding for the valuable work your group does in the community.

People do not automatically reach for their chequebooks and give money to nonprofit organizations. People have to be asked to give, and there are many ways of asking. Submitting a Letter of Intent, issuing a grant proposal for funding consideration, or responding to a Request for Proposal are some ways of eliciting financial support. **When developing a proposal, focus on the needs your organization is meeting in the community rather than the needs of your organization.** If you have organizational needs, express them within the context of the community and your target audience. For example, you may have identified a need within your organization for a website, which may be a cost-effective solution to some of the problems your organization is experiencing or may open up new opportunities for your group. A funder, on the other hand, may look at your request for a web site as an operating expense and part of the cost of doing business. The nature of your request may also give the funder the impression funder, on the other hand, may look at your request for a web site as

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

an operating expense and part of the cost of doing business. The nature of your request may also give the funder the impression that your project is not particularly urgent. To sell a funder on the web site project, focus your efforts on demonstrating how this web site will assist your target audience. If your organization assists people with disabilities, show how your clients will benefit from easier access to information and support 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. You may wish to develop a web site that is disability-friendly and meets generally accepted standards for web accessibility for people with disabilities. Generally, your request needs to be *mission oriented*, not infrastructure oriented.

Don't decide to raise money today. Proposal writing is a *process* and requires time and

patience. You need to allow yourself sufficient time to research and identify likely funders

whose missions and mandates complement those of your organization. In addition, the

length of time for grant proposal adjudication (decision making on the part of the funder)

can vary significantly. Some funders are able to give you a fairly quick response. However,

corporate funders can take *up to a year* to respond to your request because they may not

have an established deadline for making decisions and releasing the funds.

Treat your funders as you would do to investors in a business. The more informed and involved these investors are, the more likely it is that you will be able to obtain initial funding and subsequent funding in the future. The purpose of obtaining funding is to create some type of positive change. Funders want to be a part of this positive change and will assist organizations that can demonstrate a genuine need and prove they have the capacity to address that need.

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Be flexible and keep the long-range goal in mind. Perhaps your funder is not able to provide you with the full amount you sincere appreciation for the funding it has received. Remember that an initial grant of \$1,000.00 can, with good stewardship on your part, lead to additional money in the future. If your funder cannot provide financial assistance at the present time, consider other options.

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Thoughtful persistence can be a strong ally as you seek support for your organization on different levels over time.

An Approach to Successful Proposal Writing

Because most nonprofit organizations have limited resources, a targeted approach to proposal writing is often the most rewarding. Obtaining funding for your project or program will be greatly enhanced if you are an eligible organization (as defined by the funder) submitting a well-written, compelling, complete proposal that:

- Is consistent with your organization's capabilities
- Addresses a genuine community need and provides quantifiable (measurable) evidence that the need exists
- Outlines and focuses on concrete community benefits
- Stresses the uniqueness of your project and convinces the funder that the request does not duplicate an existing project or program. If similar projects or programs are in place, consider partnerships or collaborations
- Complements the project objectives and priorities of the funder
- Adheres to the funder's established program
- Asks for the right amount of financial assistance for an approved purpose (as defined by the funder) in a timely manner
- Delineates quantifiable goals and objectives
- Establishes a methodology for ongoing evaluation and project modification;
- Addresses sustainability and future funding issues, if appropriate;
- Provides public recognition for the funder that is consistent with the funder's expectations;
- Provides a detailed, reasonable and complete budget that clearly indicates what the funds will be used for, and other pending or approved funding or

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

support already established (anticipated volunteer contributions, in kind donations, fees for service);

- Includes supporting documentation required by the funder (by-laws, incorporation documents, annual report, audited financial statement, Board of Directors listing);

Includes other documentation you deem relevant to the submission (detailed job descriptions for staff or consultants to be hired, supplier quotations, drawings, lease agreements); and provides a neat, well organized, and professional-looking submission.

Reflective Question

Analyze any five important hints that a proposal writer must put into consideration

Reference

Rasey, J. Writing, Speaking, & Communication Skills for Health Professionals