



Creating Effective Funding Proposals

Description:

This tool provides a step-by-step checklist for creating a funding proposal.

How it can be used:

A proposal is a request for financial assistance to implement a project or program and must justify what you want and why. How elaborate your proposal is will depend upon the resources being requested and the size of the project or program. Use the following checklist to ensure you've covered all the key elements of an effective funding proposal.

Your proposal demonstrates whether your project or program is worthy of funding. Remember that there are usually many other organizations competing for funds. Use clear, concise language and diagrams or charts to illustrate key points.

In order to tailor your proposal to the funder, don't hesitate to communicate with them; think of them as a resource. Confirm whether they are looking for a full proposal or a letter of intent. Will they review your draft proposal and provide feedback? Find out how decisions are made. Ensure that you fully understand their funding proposal guidelines.

These are the key components of a funding proposal; however, the funder may have provided a different template or set of guidelines. Using what the funder provides, be as comprehensive as possible.

When developing a funding proposal, check to see if you have all the required elements.

Title Page

Your title page is the front cover of your proposal and includes the date, project title, location(s) of the project, name of your organization (and any key partners), reference to a specific fund if relevant, and to whom it's being submitted.

- Title of the project
- Name of potential funder with their organization and title
- Your name, address and organization
- Date





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Cover Letter

The cover letter explains that you are sponsoring the project and should include information about your organization, any key partners, and a brief overview of the project and why it is needed. Your letter should be maximum one page and written clearly and concisely.

- Introduce yourself to the funder on your organization's letterhead
- Signed by the key person in the organization
- Addressed to the contact person
- Include a short description and the reason for the project
- Showcase why you're a good fit for this project

Executive Summary

Although this follows next in the proposal, this is the last section that you write. It is a concise summary of the entire proposal. Keep it to one page in length. Summarize the project goals and objectives, main partners and key recommendations. This is the section that many funding executives will read and make a decision whether to keep reading. Ensure your project is clearly explained.

Introduction

- Briefly explain the purpose of the proposal
- Explain briefly about your organization, what you do and a brief description of your clients

Reason for Project

This section answers why your project is needed. Describe the problem, the magnitude, and the factors that compel you to develop this project. Identify the target group and any partners who are working with you. This section essentially justifies the proposal. Keep it clear and brief.

- Clearly state the problem.
- Provide supporting documentation (data) and a description of the need.
- Frame it as "solvable" and the important role your organization can play.





Project Goals and Objectives

The goal of your project should be to solve the problem described in the reason for the proposal. Outline your overall goals and your specific objectives.

- Tie goals and objectives to outcomes.
- Link to your strategic guiding documents (e.g., Health and Wellness Plan).

Project Description

The project description section is 1-2 pages and covers the following: This section describes the beneficiaries of the project. Indicate who they are, how many there are, their characteristics, locations, and reasons for vulnerability. Demonstrate how the target population was involved in the development of the project. (Include consultations details as an Appendix).

Describe the role of your partners, how and why they are involved and what each partner will contribute to the project. Ensure the details are worked out with all partners before completing your proposal.

Get letters of support from organizations that support your project. Letters should show a clear understanding of the project and why they support your work. Include letters from project partners which describe their role and commitment to the project. (Include letters of support as an Appendix)

Your project activities explain how you will reach your objectives. Provide information on who will do what, when, where, with whom, and why. Describe 1-3 activities to achieve each objective. An example of an activity could be “develop a youth peer counsellor training manual”.

- Describe what the project will do
- Include the target audience or who you intend to reach
- The key activities of the project
- How quality will be ensured
- The risks and how you will manage them
- Key partnerships and linkages
- How the project will be governed (who will lead it, who is accountable, who will report, who will approve, etc.)
- The plan for communication (why, with whom, how, when, etc.)
- How engagement will be managed (why, with whom, how, when, etc.)





Resources

This section is where the costs and benefits of the project are described as a narrative, (your detailed budget should be included as an Appendix). Demonstrate how the cost of the project will result in significant benefits to your target population. Include high level budget totals and the outcomes you plan to achieve. Be prepared to link the costs (inputs) with the products (outputs) and overall benefits (outcomes). Describe who benefits, how they benefit and how the benefits justify the cost. For example, “for a total cost of \$10,000, we will train 20 youth to be peer counsellors (an average cost of \$500 per youth), which has been shown to reduce teen pregnancies by 30%”.

The budget is a realistic estimate of all costs involved in the project. Break the costs down into categories and include any other sources of income (funding and in-kind) that are targeted toward the project. Follow the funder’s guidelines in what they will or will not fund. While you’ll refer to your budget throughout your proposal, remember to include your detailed budget as an Appendix.

- Provide a financial summary and a budget overview that is directly linked to the activities
- Attach the full budget as an appendix
- Include in-kind resources (volunteer time, administrative supports, work spaces, use of equipment, etc.)
- Outline the human resources that will be needed
- Describe the infrastructure that will be required (e.g., kitchen, canoes, etc.)
- Make sure it’s realistic and don’t include any unexplained amounts for miscellaneous items

Monitor and Evaluation

This section describes your due diligence related to the project. How you will monitor the progress, how you will report to the funder and target population, and how you will evaluate the project.

Describe how, when, and what you will monitor. Focus on the outputs and outcomes that will be achieved. Plan to submit regular reports (including expenditures) and a final report. The final report should include the same topics as the monthly reports, plus “Lessons Learned” which describes the impact of the project. Keep your report brief but honest and analytical.





Your evaluation plan will describe what you will measure and how you will measure it. What are your indicators of success? What tools will you use (e.g., surveys, interviews)? How will you disseminate your results?

- Describe what will be monitored – performance and outcome indicators
- Explain who will monitor the progress of the project, how it will be monitored and when (e.g., committee, manager, etc.)
- Explain who will evaluate the project and the approaches that will be used
- Include the types of reporting (both interim and final)

Action/Implementation Plan

Describe the stages of the project or program and outline the activities in each stage. Include the resources that are needed for each activity, such as work space, human resources and equipment. Will there be products from the activities such as PSAs, posters, or handbooks?

- Outline how the project will roll out
- Be sequential (as much as possible) and realistic
- Include activities, timelines, and performance indicators

Organization Information

Briefly describe your organization and key partner organizations' goals and activities, note your experience in working with projects of a similar nature and identify all key capabilities and resources. Describe the personnel who will be working on the project and who will be in charge. Job descriptions and organizational chart(s) may be helpful.

- Brief background and history
- Vision, mission, values, goals
- Structure (e.g., organizational chart) and how you fit into the community
- Key activities and role of your organization
- Why you're a good fit ("Why us") and your capacity to complete the project
- Past successes and testimonials





Conclusion

End with a paragraph that wraps up your proposal by reminding the funder of why you'd be an excellent candidate for funding. Provide a name and contact information if they want more information. Thank them for considering your proposal.

Appendices

Keep your proposal brief and easy to read by including some documents as Appendices. Suggestions would be lists, diagrams, letters of support, detailed budget, and job descriptions. Review your proposal for any details that could be included as an Appendix. Your funders will thank you.

- Supporting documents (e.g., letters of support)
- Detailed budget
- Detailed organizational chart
- Health Plan or guiding strategic documents
- Contact information for governing body – Board of Directors, Health Committee or Chief and Council
- Annual Report
- Audited financials
- Any instruments already created to be used (draft surveys, questionnaires, etc.)
- Awards won
- Media
- Definition of terms
- List of acronyms

Tips

- Before submitting your proposal, share your draft with others to get feedback.
- Avoid jargon and always explain acronyms.
- Use examples that support your comments.
- Offer a sample letter to help your supporters draft their letters of support.
- **Check your spelling, punctuation, grammar, facts, and formatting.**
- Call to make sure the funder received the proposal.
- Check on status of proposal in 3-4 weeks; if proposal is turned down, find out why.

