Writing Grant Proposals

Summary Guidelines

Adapted from The Foundation Center's The Guide to Proposal Writing

Before you start, your organization needs to have:

> 1) written mission statement;

> 2) non-profit status/ or fiscal agent to receive funds;

> 3) credible program or service achievements or plans in support of your   mission.

The money for your project cannot be needed too quickly.

Specific projects tend to be of greater interest to most foundation and corporate funders than general operating requests.

Diversify your base of funding support. Funders are looking for sustainability of organizations beyond receipt of their own gifts.

Proposal Writing

Background Documentation- ***Concept; Program; Expenses***

Identify someone who knows the agency and writes well.

Clear writing – identify central point of proposal, all other points should flow easily from it.

Outline what you want to say.

Avoid jargon- words and acronyms not generally known- select words for precision**.**

Be compelling, but don't overstate your case. Tell your story with examples, illuminate your vision. Personalized but brief. Don't promise more than can be delivered.

Keep it simple- concisely presented ideas.

Keep it generic- develop a generic proposal with certain customizing touches, that can be submitted to a number of sources.

Revise and edit- once done, put it away temporarily then a day or two later, reread it with detachment and objectivity. Look for logic and details. Get someone else to look at it. Ask for critical review of case and narrative flow.

Developing the Proposal

Executive Summary (should be concise and easier to write last)

Problem- brief statement of problem or need (1-2 paragraphs)

Solution- short description of the project, what will take place and how many people will benefit, how and where it will operate, for how long and who will staff it. (1-2 paragraphs)

Funding Requirements- an explanation of the amount of grant money required for the project and what your plans are for funding it in the future. (1 paragraph)

Organization and Expertise- brief statement of the name, history, purpose, and activities of your agency and its capacity to carry out this proposal.
        (1 paragraph)

The Statement of Need

Get reader to understand the problem that the project will remedy. Be succinct, but persuasive. Assemble all arguments and present in logical manner.

Consider the following:

1) which facts or stats best support project. Data must be accurate.
2) give the reader hope. Funders don't want to invest in things that are absolutely hopeless to solve.
3) decide if you want to put your project forward as a model.
4) determine if it is reasonable to portray the need as acute.
5) decide if you can demonstrate that your program addresses the need differently or better than other projects before it. Collaborate with other organizations if possible.
6) avoid circular reasoning. In circular reason you present the absence of a solution as the problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.   (*You want to build a community swimming pool. You say the problem is we have no pool. Building a pool will solve the problem. Instead, cite what a pool has meant to a neighboring community, permitting it to offer recreation, exercise, and physical therapy programs. The statement might refer to a survey that underscores the target audience's planned usage of the facility and conclude with the connection between the proposed usage and potential benefits to enhance life in the community.*)

    Make need statement compelling with:

        Anecdotes, keep them succinct.
        Real-life examples, (fictitious names if necessary).
        Actual quotes from those who have benefitted.
        Emphasize the needs of those you serve, not your own needs.
        Always make the funder feel there is hope to solve the problem.

Statement of need doesn't have to be long and involved.

Developing the Proposal

In this section, describe specifics of the project to get reader excited about it.

5 Subsections:

1. Objectives
2. Methods
3. Staffing/Administration
4. Evaluation
5. Sustainability

Four Types of Objectives

1) Behavioral- a human action is anticipated;
2) Performance- a specific time frame within which a behavior will occur.
3) Process-the manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.
4) Product- a tangible item will result.

Present objectives very clearly. By means of the objectives you have explained what will be achieved.

Methods should match magnitude of the objectives.

Each objective has related methods to be achieved. The methods section describes the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives. Methods should be doable or you lose credibility. Methods section should present the order and timing for the various tasks. Defend your methods if they are new or unorthodox.

Staffing/ Administration

In describing the methods, you will have mentioned staffing for the project. You now need to devote a few sentences to discussing the number of staff, their qualifications, and specific assignments. Details about individual staff members involved in the project can be included either as part of this section or in the appendix, depending on the length and importance of this information.

Staffing can refer to volunteers or to consultants, as well as paid staff. Salary and project costs are affected by the qualifications of the staff. Delineate the practical experience you require for key staff, as well as level of expertise and educational background. Explain anything unusual about the proposed staffing for the project.

Evaluation

A key aspect of most project descriptions is the evaluation component of the grant proposal. This section of the proposal describes how you and the funder will know if the proposed project succeeds or not. A succinct description of that evaluation plan is a necessary ingredient of the successful proposal. The funder wants to see that an organization has internal mechanisms in place to evaluate programs. The evaluation should be one or two paragraphs describing a well thought-out evaluation plan and some projected indicators of success, either qualitative, quantitative or both, laid out in the body of the proposal.