

PROPOSAL WRITING TIPS

THIS INFORMATION IS DESIGNED TO ASSIST YOU IN DEVELOPING A PROPOSAL FOR FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS.
IT IS NOT SPECIFIC TO ANY ONE PROGRAM, BUT GENERALIZED FOR ALL PROGRAMS.

STEP 1

GETTING STARTED

Organize your ideas and define your project

Your proposal tells a story with a clear purpose and vision and places your project into context. It should be well organised and easy to understand.

A quick way to get started is to answer the basic questions Who? What? Where? When? And How?

Allow yourself time to plan ahead and prepare in time to meet deadline dates. It can take around ten to fifteen hours or more to prepare a proposal including thinking, planning and writing time.

- Start by writing an outline
- Describe the project in one sentence
- What are the main goals for the project? Have you established specific, achievable objectives?
- How will those objectives be met? Be specific. *These are action steps.*
- What steps will it take to plan and carry out the project?
- Who will carry out the project? The applicant? Volunteers? Hired Staff?
- What qualifies them to successfully carry out this project?
- Who will participate in the project? Who is the intended audience?
- Who will benefit from the project? Do they have a say in how the project is carried out? Is their voice "heard" in the application?
- When will the project take place? Prepare a timeline from beginning to completion, each step you will have to complete - include planning and preliminary work as well as the big finish. *This step not only helps you to outline exactly how your project will be carried out, it provides you with a good planning tool to follow.*
- Where will the project take place?
- What is unique or special about the project?
- Why is it important for this project to happen? Why is it needed? *Also think about why the funding agency should invest in this project*

STEP 2

RESEARCH

Find The Right Match

Now that you have a clear outline of the project, do some research to find partners, revenue sources, donations (in-kind) and funding materials that support your project.

Make sure you are thinking of applying to the right programme

- Are there other potential partners/collaborators involved? What will their role be? *At this point, you may want to contact them to receive a written commitment or an expression of interest. Ask for copies of resumes or bios.*
- What possible revenue sources might there be for this project? Explore sponsors, donations, services in kind or earned revenue components of the project.
- **Contact funding agencies to request information on programs or speak to a representative to help guide you to the right program that will fit your project**
- **Once you receive the information, read the guidelines, criteria, and eligibility requirements to ensure you are applying to the right program for your project.**
- Collect supporting documents that you would like to attach to your proposal – endorsement letters, resumes, articles, visual or audio material, etc.
- Budget research – look up the basic costs of materials, supplies, services or salaries that you may need for the proposed project. Collect price lists.
- Are there specific planning considerations or costs associated with the details that you have outlined above?
- Contact the funding officer if you have any questions or need guidance – they are there to help

STEP 3

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

Project Description

Be Passionate about your project, but do not make the mistake of waxing poetic without presenting concrete details.

SUMMARY

- Start with a one sentence description of the project
- Briefly outline the mission statement or vision of the project and why the project is needed
- Explain how your project meets the needs you have described

OBJECTIVES

- Objectives are really a more detailed version of your mission/vision statement. *Mission statement is a broad, global picture of what you want to do. Objectives are specific and well defined and must be measurable*
- Stay focused – your objectives should flow in a natural fashion
- Be positive – demonstrate that your objectives can be achieved, include any information that may support this
- Don't confuse your objectives with the steps of the plan
- This is a good place to connect your projects need to the funders program objectives. List the fund objectives or fund criteria and describe how your project meets them.
- Emphasise your project's uniqueness. Be factual and passionate without losing clarity or overwriting. Include the necessary information – the shortest clearest statement will be the strongest.

STEP 3 CONTINUED

WRITING THE PROPOSAL

How Will The Project Be Evaluated?

<p><i>The people reading your proposal likely have to read dozens of others so communicate as clearly as you can.</i></p> <p><i>Provide all the essential information – do not assume that the assessors already know the organization or will figure it out and provide for you.</i></p> <p><i>Provide timelines – many funding programs require specific timelines attached to fiscal year budgets</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Describe the expected outcomes of the project▪ How do you see the successes of this project▪ How will you measure successes and how will you provide this information? <i>(possibilities include a final report, discussion or feedback forms completed by participants or beneficiaries)</i> ▪ When will the project begin and when will it be completed▪ Factor in the time required for final reporting and financial reports
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STEP 4

THE BUDGET

Budgets Provide Essential Information

Organise your budget so that it is easy to read

List all expenses and all sources of revenue for the project

Budgets with detailed breakdowns show that you have done your homework and understand the real costs of the project

- Make sure the budget is balanced (*budget should reflect a plan to break even*) and check that all figures add up.
- Poorly prepared budgets undermine confidence in the applicants ability to carry out a project with sound financial management.
- Be realistic – as much as possible, base figures on actual known costs – collect price lists, get quotes, etc. Do not pad your budget.
- If requested, provide budget summary requested in the application guidelines in addition to a detailed budget
- If the project for which you are applying for funding is part of a larger budget, provide both the larger budget and break-out budget with detailed expenses and revenues for just the portion for which you are requesting funding.
- Include other revenue (pending or confirmed); earned revenue (ie. ticket or product sales or fees), fundraising, in-kind, other government funding, the organisations contribution or cash and/or in-kind, etc.
- If someone has committed to donate goods or services to the project, this is considered in kind. This could include use of equipment, materials, or facilities that would normally have costs associated with them
- All in-kind revenues must have a corresponding expense in the budget
- If you are applying to other funders, indicate with sources are confirmed or pending. Is it clear to the reader whether or not the project will proceed if the application is not successful?