

Proposal Writing¹

Grants often require written proposals or completed application forms. Proposals outline who you are and the plan you are proposing. If the funding body does not provide guidelines, use the following to develop your proposal.

Components of a written proposal include:

- A. Summary
- B. Introduction
- C. Problem Statement or Needs Assessment
- D. Program Goals and Objectives
- E. Methods
- F. Evaluation
- G. Future/Other Necessary Funding
- H. Budget

A. Summary

This provides a clear, concise outline of the request. It appears at the beginning of the proposal, but is not prepared until the proposal is complete.

The summary should include:

- The name of your organization and a phrase or two about its credibility
- The reason for the grant request: issues, problems or needs to be met
- What you want to achieve through this funding
- An explanation of how the project is different and why it will succeed
- The kind of activities to be used to accomplish these objectives
- The total cost of the project, funds already committed and amount requested

B. Introduction

This describes your organization, its purpose, programs and services. It is your chance to turn readers on or off. Focus on your credibility in the area for which you are asking for support. Provide evidence you can do what you say you are going to do; this should be about half the length of the proposal.

Information to include:

- Name of organization
- How many people belong
- When, who and why the organization was started
- Where it is located
- A statement of purpose, goals and philosophy
- Explain how it operates – as a registered charity or an incorporated group

¹ Recreation Director's Handbook

- Describe how responsibilities are distributed within the organization – names of executive, name and address of contact, names of those chiefly responsible for the project and their duties
- Significant events in the organization's history
- Prior and current events
- Accomplishments and impact on community
- Size and characteristics of clientele
- Other funding sources and their positive comments
- Evaluation results of your programs
- Quotes of support from clients, other agencies, experts in the field and public figures

Build a case for your ability to accomplish the intended purpose. Letters of support and endorsement can enhance your credibility. Limit the number of letters and make sure they are truly supportive. Draw out and highlight powerful quotes and attach as appendices.

C. Problem Statement or Needs Assessment

This is the most critical part of your project. It represents the reason behind the proposal. It documents the needs to be met or problems to be solved by the proposed funding. A needs assessment generally focuses on the conditions in the lives of your clients that you wish to change. A problem statement looks at a specific situation, compares it to similar situations that exist in other communities and shows the broader implications of your program.

It should:

- Clearly relate to the purpose and goals of your organization
- Name the people or agencies with whom you are concerned
- Identify the need or the problem that will be the focus
- Be supported by evidence drawn from your experience, statistics and the testimony of people and organizations known to be knowledgeable about the situation.

D. Support Plan with Program Goals and Objectives

These are broad, encompassing statements of what you wish to accomplish. They explain what you will do to reach your goals. Program objectives are more specific, realistic and measurable. They will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of your program.

Example

Goal: To make a safer community.

Objective: To decrease the incidences of youth vandalism in the community 20% by 2002.

E. Methods

These describe the activities to be used to achieve the desired results. They should be accompanied by an explanation of why you think they will be effective. Ordinarily, this justification will come from the organization's past experience, as well as the experiences of others in the field.

A timeline should be included, providing a clear picture of the activities in an organized manner.

Key elements to include:

- A clear description of the program activities
- Reasons for the selection of the activities; why they will succeed
- The sequence of activities
- A description of staff selection and training
- A description of participant selection
- Names of people outside the organization who will be references

F. Evaluation

Most funding sources require your proposal to contain an evaluation section. It presents a plan to determine the degree to which the objectives were met and the methods followed. Most evaluations look at:

- Whether the program has achieved its stated objectives
- If the accomplishment of objectives can be attributed to the program
- Whether the program was delivered as proposed

Designing the Evaluation

These steps are helpful in developing an evaluation:

- Clarify your program objectives. Ensure they are measurable and that an evaluation can be performed.
- Determine who is going to see the evaluation. People inside and outside your agency have different questions they want answered. Specific evaluation questions are influenced by who will be looking at your evaluation.
- Clarify what you will evaluate. Be sure you are clear about the funding agency's expectations.
- Determine who will conduct the evaluation – inside or outside person.
- Determine if it will include an analysis of cost-benefit or cost-effectiveness.
- Determine how the data will be collected. This depends on the nature of the program. Some of the many ways of collecting evaluation data are: interviews, client, staff and evaluator observations and examination of statistics.
- Determine how the data will be analyzed.
- Determine the report format. Make sure you are clear on what the funding source is asking for.

The evaluation section should also:

- Explain who will be performing the evaluation and how they will be selected
- Define the evaluation criteria
- Describe the data gathering methods
- Explain test instruments or questionnaires being used
- Describe the process of data analysis
- Show how the evaluation will be used for program improvements
- Describe the reports to be produced

G. Future and other necessary funding:

This section describes a plan for continuing beyond the grant period and the availability of other resources necessary to implement the plan.

There are three approaches to this section:

- If the program is to continue once the grant runs out, state where future funding would come from.
- If the program is for construction, detail the costs of maintaining new or renovated facilities and show where the funds would come from to cover these costs.
- If the program is to purchase equipment, specify other funds necessary to support this acquisition and where those funds would come from.

This section should also include:

- Names of others whose support has been requested
- A list of other organizations or individuals who are supporting this or similar projects
- Any previous contact with the funding body being approached, plus previous financial assistance

H. Budget

An estimate of what it will cost to implement the plan is necessary in a proposal. It should clearly specify the costs to be met by the funding source and those that your organization and others will provide. The numbers should be as specific as possible. The budget format usually contains two basic components:

- **Personnel** – including salaries and wages, fringe benefits, consultant and contract services.
- **Non-personnel** – including space costs, rental, lease or purchase of equipment, consumable supplies, travel, telephone, etc.

A well-written proposal that includes all the relevant and required information may be the determining factor to the success of your grant request.