

## How to Write A Grant Proposal

- Is your community planning to seek funds from foundations or corporations as part of an overall fund-raising plan?
  - Have you already applied for funding and been turned down?
  - Has your community already acquired 501(c)(3) status and is it ready to receive grant funds?
  - Are you wondering how you can get started on funding your community's projects?
- If so, your community may want to consider these tips for writing effective grant proposals.

### How To Prepare

- 1) **Define your project** by clarifying your underlying purpose. Determine general project goals and specific objectives to accomplish the goals. Consider a timetable, anticipate outcomes, and develop a method for evaluating results and estimating staffing needs. You also should determine how your project adheres to the philosophy or mission of your agency. Potential funders will consider more favorably fully developed and practical project plans.
- 2) **Estimate costs and identify the right funding sources** by looking for consistency between the purpose/goals of your project and those of the funder. Direct contact with the funding source is imperative. Be sure to inquire about the maximum amount of money available and the average size of awards. You also should find out how the funder makes decisions, what types of projects it funds, and whether it has other grant sources. If possible, identify a project officer to be your liaison. Find a potential funder who will support your proposal so you will not have to change your goals to fit those of the funder.
- 3) **Acquire proposal guidelines and submission requirements** by requesting this information from the funding source.

### How To Write an Effective Proposal

- 1) The *Executive Summary* conveys all key information and serves to convince the reader of the importance of your project and its potential in successfully addressing your goals. It should include a brief statement of the problem/need recognized by your organization and a concise description of the proposed solution. You also should give an explanation of the amount of grant money required for your project and any plans for future funding. You should briefly state the name, history, and activities of your organization, emphasizing its capacity to carry-out the proposal.
- 2) The *Statement of Need* presents the facts and evidence that support the need for your project. It should demonstrate that your program addresses the need differently or better than other projects. Remember to include goals and measurable objectives.
- 3) The *Project Description* presents your plan by aligning your project with the purpose/goals of the funding source. It should include specific details of the method and process by which the goals and objectives will be accomplished. Be sure to note the distinction between methods, objectives, and goals. Outline the proposed activities and their expected outcomes. A description of personnel functions with names and credentials of key staff/ consultants often proves beneficial in this portion of the proposal.
- 4) The *Evaluation Plan* indicates you take your objectives seriously and want to know how well you have achieved them. Two types of evaluations are product/outcome measures and process analyses. Describe the manner in which evaluation information will be collected and how it will be analyzed and the results reported. Consider asking the funder about its evaluation expectations.

5) The **Budget** specifies estimated costs, listing all the personnel and non-personnel items included in your project. The budget should include new costs added if the project is funded and any on-going expenses for items that will be allocated to the project. Costs should be grouped into subcategories, reflecting the critical areas of expense. A narrative portion might help explain unusual items in the budget, though it is not always needed.

6) Are **Supporting Materials** needed? If so, attach a resume of your nonprofit organization, describing its structure, programs, and special expertise. Attach a list of the board of directors. These materials may endorse the project and the applicant, provide certifications, or add information about project personnel and consultants.

7) The **Conclusion** calls attention to the future, outlining possible followup activities. State how the project might carry on without further grant support to assure the funders that they are making an investment in something that will last. This is your last chance to make an appeal for your project. Briefly restate what your organization wants to do, why it is important, and why you need funding to accomplish it.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Internet sites: <http://www.tgci.com> or <http://www.nonprofits.com>
- **Writing Winning Proposals** by Judith Mirick Gooch. Washington, DC: Council for Advancement and Support of Education.

*Additional copies of this Technote are available from the Office of Community Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Room 701, 300 7th Street, S.W., Washington, DC 20024 (1-800-645-4712). Copies may also be obtained at*

**<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ocd>**

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