# Tips to Preparing a Grant Proposal

# Successful grant writing involves the coordination of several activities, including planning, searching for data and resources, writing and packaging a proposal, submitting a proposal to a funder, and follow-up. Here are some steps that will help you to prepare.

## Preparation

You are likely to find preliminary grant writing steps to be the most time consuming, yet most vital aspect of the process. If done well, your preparatory work will simplify the writing stage.

**1. Define your project**

Clarify the purpose of your project and write a concise mission statement.

Define the scope of work to focus your funding search.

Determine the broad project goals, then identify the specific objectives that define how you will focus the work to accomplish those goals.

Example:

Goal: To improve production quality.

Objective 1: Recruit advanced production talent.

Objective 2: Train mid-level producers.

Objective 3: Upgrade production equipment.

These goals and objectives suggest the proposal will request support for recruitment activity, production training, and equipment purchase. In contrast, a different proposal with the same goal might focus only on equipment upgrades.

Decide who will benefit. Benefits may extend beyond the direct beneficiary to include the audience, other institutions, etc.

Draft expected project outcomes in specific measurable terms.

Draft a timeline that includes the planning phase, the period of searching for funds, proposal writing, and the intended project start date. Periodically update the timeline as you learn more about submission deadlines, award timetables, etc.

**2. Identify the right funding sources**

Foundation centers, computerized databases, station development offices, publications, and public libraries are some of the resources available to assist your funding search.

Do not limit your funding search to one source.

Look for a match between your project and the grants you seek by looking for consistency between the purpose and goals of your project and the funder. In addition, pinpoint specific funding priorities and preferences.

Make direct contact with funders to support projects like yours.

Request proposal guidelines. Also request a list of projects previously funded through this specific grant program. Perhaps an annual report is available.

Inquire about the maximum amount available. Also, find out the average size and funding range of awards.

Determine if funding levels of the grants you select are appropriate for your project. Note whether there is a funding floor or ceiling.

Find out whether the funder has other grant sources for which your project is eligible.

**3. Contact the funders**

Think of the funder as a resource.

Identify a project officer who will address your questions.

Some funders offer technical assistance, others do not. Ask for technical assistance, including a review of proposal drafts.

Inquire about how proposals are reviewed and how decisions are made.

Inquire about budgetary requirements and preferences. Are matching funds required? Is in-kind acceptable as a portion of applicants' share? What may be counted as in-kind, and how might it be applied? Learn about payment processes, including cash flow.

Remember, the contacts you make may prove invaluable, even if not for now.

**4. Acquire proposal guidelines**

Read the guidelines carefully, then read them again. Ask the funder to clarify your questions.

Guidelines usually tell you about:

* submission deadlines  
  eligibility  
  proposal format: award levels forms, margins, spacing, evaluation process and restrictions on the number criteria of pages, etc.  
  review timetable  
  budgets  
  funding goals and priorities  
  award levels  
  evaluation process and criteria  
  whom to contact  
  other submission requirements

**5. Know the submission deadline**

Plan to submit your proposal on or preferably before the deadline.

Determine what format the funder requires for submission.

Be realistic about whether you have time to prepare a competitive proposal that meets the deadline.

Know the funder's policies on late submissions, exceptions, and mail delays.

Find out how the funder will notify you about the receipt and status of your proposal. Factor this information into your timeline.

**6. Determine personnel needs**

Identify required personnel both by function and, if possible, by name. Contact project consultants, trainers, and other auxilliary personnel to seek availability, acquire permission to include them in the project, and negotiate compensation. Personnel compensation is important budget information.

**7. Update your timeline**

This is a good point at which to update your timeline, now that you know about submission deadlines and review timetables. Factor into your schedule time to write multiple drafts, solicit project officer for review of draft, gather relevant and permissible materials, and prepare an impartial critique of your proposal for clarity, substance, and form.

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