

WRITING COMPETITIVE GRANT PROPOSALS

A Collaborative Approach
to Developing Grant Proposals
With a Competitive Edge

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This step-by-step guide will help you develop proposals with all the component parts necessary for a well thought out grant request in today's competitive world.

A grant request is a sales document. The copy must not only inform, it must sell. Therefore you must allocate the time and resources to develop proposals which will attract the attention you want.

Step 1.

Revisit your mission statement to make sure:

1. The mission statement reflects what you are currently doing and,
2. The mission statement continues to reflect the need for the service you are providing.

Step 2.

Prepare a strategic plan.

Step 3.

Create a culture of stewardship within your organization.

1. Train your volunteers, staff and board members to be on the lookout for
 - a. funding opportunities
 - b. stories, both successes and failures that can be used in writing proposals
 - c. opportunities for expanding or developing new programs which will further your mission
2. Involve everyone in your organization, your volunteers, staff members, and board members, in developing a sustainable program and planning for the future.
3. Give everyone involved with your organization copies of the Fund Raising Suggestion Form (provided) and use it.
4. Make sure everyone knows that their suggestions are taken seriously.

Step 4.

Create a team for planning and writing grants. Depending on the size and complexity of your organization, this team could change with different grants. The grant writer, whether staff or consultant, should provide the appropriate leadership and focus for the team to develop the proposal. This team should include:

The executive director, (often also the grant writer)
The grant writer

Representative from the program staff
Financial expert (bookkeeper, etc)

Step 5.

Prepare a case statement.

Once you have a strong mission statement and strategic plan in place, the next step is to develop a case statement, a document which can have many uses, including:

- Provide background and good copy for proposals
- Provide copy for major donor solicitations,
- Provide background for volunteer recruitment and training,
- Provide background for staff training.

(Note: I have included a template for preparing a case statement)

Step 6.

Meet with your team and decide what your needs and priorities are.

Step 7.

Research funding sources.

The Nonprofit Support Center (NSCSB), and the San Luis Obispo County Community Foundation (SLOCCF), are great resources. The Nonprofit Support Center holds periodic workshops in San Luis Obispo and provides a research library in Santa Maria with access to the Foundation Center library for fund development, an excellent resource. The Community Foundation has developed a list of foundations and corporations which fund locally.

The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Corporations: San Luis Obispo County, California 2005, a project of the United Way of SLO County and PG&E Company, and ACTION for Healthy Communities, are both excellent resources for statistical data about SLO County.

Note: Although you might want to do some specific research, you and your team should be looking for grant and other funding opportunities on an ongoing basis.

Step 8.

Once you have identified a funding source, research their guidelines, past recipients, size of grants, and any other bits of information which can help you hook into what they are likely to fund in your organization.

Step 9.

Meet with your team and get input from them to decide on your approach. Use your strategic plan and what you know about the foundation.

- 1, Define your project
 - a. expand an ongoing program
 - b. develop a new model
 - c. capacity building (train staff)
 - d. operating support

2. Identify goals and objectives:

For example, when Monterey History and Art Association wanted to develop an education program for 4th graders studying California History, we decided that living history was the mechanism to reach these students.

The goal was to provide a living history experience to 4th graders, and the following were our objectives:

- Objective 1 – develop the curriculum
- Objective 2 – recruit and train docents
- Objective 3 – provide transportation to the museum

3. Define who will benefit
4. Elaborate on your expected project outcomes

Step 10.

1. With your team, develop a timeline for the creation of the proposal:

- planning phase
- proposal writing
- intended project start date.

2. Update your timeline periodically.

Step 11.

Contact the foundation's program officer and discuss your idea with him or her. Be prepared to listen attentively for their bias and/or particular interest. Establishing relationships is critical in fund raising.

Step 12.

Develop an outline either using the format provided by the foundation, such as United Way or the Community Foundation's application forms, or a template similar to the one included in this handout.

Step 13.

1. Write your first draft.
 - a. use copy already developed in your case statement
 - b. tailor the copy for your audience
 - c. cover the following
 - (1) purpose
 - (2) feasibility
 - (3) community need
 - (4) funds needed
 - (5) accountability
 - (6) competence

2. Use the following questions as a guide:
 - a. Who are you?
 - b. What do you want?
 - c. Why – what is the problem?
 - d. How will you address the problem?
 - e. What are your qualifications?
 - f. Who will benefit?
 - g. What are your objectives & how will you meet them?
 - h. How will you measure your results?
 - i. Does your funding request fit with the foundation's goals & objectives?
 - j. What will be the impact of the funds received, i.e., will they be matched?
 - k. What is the community support?
 - l. How will you sustain your program after the grant runs out?

3. Determine personnel needs:
 - a. Identify personnel by function and, if possible, by name
 - b. Contact project consultants, trainers
 - c. Get their resumes and/or bios
 - d. Get permission to include them in the project
 - e. Negotiate compensation

Step 14.

Have an outsider read and critique your proposal.

Step 15.

Write your second draft.

Step 16.

Have someone on your team (not the grant writer) edit your second draft.

Step 17.

Have someone other than the grant writer proof the document.

Step 18.

Put the package together.

Step 19.

Send it off with good wishes and celebrate!

A Proposal Template

Some of the critical elements in a proposal that will make it competitive are: concise, persuasive writing; well organized structure; attention to details; attention to the specifications of the foundation; and a reasonable budget. The typical component parts of a grant proposal are enumerated below:

Abstract or Summary – No more than one page which includes:

- Organizational summary
- Programming history
- Statement of need

Narrative

- The purpose of your program
- Your goals and measurable objectives
- The method to be used to accomplish your goals and objectives
- A description of intended scope of work with expected outcomes
- A Schedule of key project date/Project timeline
- Target population
- Plans for promoting

Credentials

- Your organization
- Key Individuals
- Other organizations involved in the project:

Method of evaluation

Plans for monitoring

Budget and, if requested, an explanation of budget items

Supporting materials

- Endorsements from partnering agencies and/or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)
- Brochures
- Resumes
- Supporting letters
- Articles about the organization
- Financial report
- Annual report

The Case Statement

A good case statement can provide you with good copy which can be used over and over. It can be used in grant proposals, individual & corporate solicitations, special events, and public relations.

Key components:

- 1) Brief history of the organization
- 2) Why the organization and its programs are needed. Include fact sheet and other documentation, including expert research, on the need.
- 3) What does your organization do that no one else does? Do your services complement others or fill in gaps in service? Mention any collaboration you are a part of.
- 4) What are your programs? List your accomplishments and the next steps you plan to take for each program.
- 5) Are you cost effective?
- 6) Who are you benefiting?
- 7) What are your goals and objectives for the next one to five years
- 8) Is your organization capable of meeting these goals and objectives: list staff qualifications, awards, press clippings, testimonials, etc.
- 9) Copy of your tax exempt status
- 10) List of board of directors
- 11) Financial statements
- 12) List your top contributors and volunteers

The case statement can then become a resource for your grant writing or be included in your grant request as an addendum.

Fund Raising Suggestion Form

Name: _____

Date: _____

Anecdote: _____

Suggested improvement/expansion: _____

Suggested funding source: _____
