

Writing A Funding Proposal

Writing proposals is often seen as a difficult thing. But if you have done good project planning before sitting down to write your proposal, most of the information you need to complete the proposal will be available to you.

Some General Information:

Before getting into the specific areas a proposal should include, here are some general tips:

- Make sure that your request fits the funder's mandate. You may want to call the funder to discuss your project ideas before you write your proposal.
- Answer all the questions asked by the funder.
- Be as clear and concise as possible.
- Support your comments.
- Keep the language simple and direct. Avoid jargon and acronyms.
- The final copy should be neat, easy to read and carefully proofread.
- Make sure the numbers in the budget add up.
- Be positive.

The Components of a Proposal

Any proposal that you write will probably include the following topics:

- **Introduction** - describes your organization, its qualifications and experience.

In this section, you will describe your organization, its mandate, its membership or clients and its programs and activities. This kind of information helps to establish your experience and ability to successfully manage and complete the project.



- **Problem or Needs Statement** - Describes the need for the project.

In this section, you should be able to answer these kinds of questions:

- What problems are you trying to address and what needs are you attempting to meet?
- If your project is to help people, are they interested in participating in the project?
- Why does your organization want to do this project?

Needs statements should be focused on some specific aspect of the problem – literacy is a long-term, complex issue and it may not be possible to meet all of the literacy needs of people in your community through one project.

- **Goals and Objectives** - Describes what you hope to accomplish and what steps need to be taken in order to meet your goal.

Goals describe what you want to accomplish and objectives are the specific steps you will take in order to meet your goals. Here's an example of a goal: ***"To support family literacy activities within the community."***

For each goal, there are several short-term objectives. Objectives state the main activities or tasks you need to carry out to meet your goal. It is important to keep your objectives:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Time-limited**

Examples of objectives could be:

1. To set up a family reading centre in the community library;
2. To promote family literacy activities at the school, daycare and adult education programs by holding family reading circles;
3. To hold a family reading program on the local radio station one evening per week during the winter.



- **Action plan and Schedule** - Describes what you will actually do to achieve the objectives.

In this section, you will clearly describe in detail the steps you will take to meet each objective. The Action Plan describes **what** you will do, **who** will do it, **how** you will involve the target group and **when** each activity will occur. Funders want to see that your group has anticipated and thought through each step of the project.

Here's an example: *We have approached the local librarian to set up a family reading centre in the library that will offer structured activities to families two nights a week. The Family Literacy Coordinator will organize and lead the activities and will be responsible for promoting each session throughout the community.*

- **Evaluation** - Describes a plan for determining how well the objectives are met.

Evaluation is helpful because it:

- It lets you think about what you are doing and why
- It lets you know if you're doing what you said you would
- It tells you what's working well
- It lets you know what you need to change and how you can improve your project
- It shows other communities what has worked for you
- It gives you ideas for future projects

An evaluation plan is linked to your project objectives and activities. A plan should include:

- how you will measure success (indicators) *e.g. # of families participating in family reading activities;*
- what results you hope to achieve *e.g. more families using the library; more awareness of the importance of reading for both parents and their children.*
- how you will gather information *e.g. survey, feedback session with parents.*



- **Budget** - Outlines the total costs of the project, including in-kind support

The budget is a very important part of the proposal. It should very clearly show how much money you require in order to carry out the project as described in the action plan. It should include:

- all salary costs listed by position;
- benefits (Employer’s share of EI & CPP; Vacation Pay);
- any other costs related to staff;
- rent;
- materials and supplies;
- telephone and fax;
- equipment rental;
- other costs (provide clear details).

Some funders may have limits on how much you can request for each item. It is important to stay within that limit.

- **Other Funding** - Describes other sources of funding or support that you have received or are applying for in order to deliver the project.

You should also list any donations, in-kind support or other sources of funding. Example of in-kind support may be free space for your program or the donation of a computer.

Example Budget

Family Reading Circle Project

Staff Costs	
Family Literacy Coordinator (\$20/hr x 20 hr/week x 16 weeks)	6,400.00
Mandatory Benefits Costs (10%)	640.00
General Project Costs (or O & M)	
Rent	in-kind
Materials & Supplies	1,500.00
Phone, Fax, Photocopies	600.00
TOTAL	\$ 9,140.00



- **Letters of Support** - Shows that other groups, organizations and individuals in your community are aware of your project and support it.

Most funders will ask for at least two letters of support. They let the funders know that you have discussed your project with others in the community and that there is support for the activities you are proposing to carry out.

- **Appendices** - Any supporting documents like a needs assessment, community profile or information about your organization.

Appendices are attachments to the proposal that provide useful additional information for the funders. It is helpful to use appendices rather than overcrowding the proposal itself. Any supporting documents that demonstrate the need for your project or the structure of your organization can be attached to your proposal as appendices.

Top Ten Ways to Get Your Proposal Read!

1. Make sure you know something about the company or agency before you submit your request. Call and ask them for their guidelines
2. Individualize the proposal. “To Whom it May Concern” indicates you haven’t done your homework.
3. Be sure to include all the information they request.
4. Don’t overwhelm them with support materials such as videos. The ideal length of a proposal should be 4 – 6 pages.
5. Be sure to call and follow up on your request 3-4 weeks after submitting it.
6. If an organization supported you in the past make sure to say thank you. Keep in touch with them and let them know how the funds were spent.
7. If this is your first time requesting funds from this organization don’t ask for too much.
8. If you are turned down – call the organization to find out why.
9. Illustrate the benefits of supporting your cause to the organization.
10. Be passionate about your goals and objectives and make your enthusiasm clear in the proposal.

