Guide for Writing a Funding Proposal

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This Guide for Writing a Funding Proposal was created to help empower people to be successful in gaining funds for projects that provide worthwhile social service. A major theme that runs throughout the Guide is a concern for the development of meaningful cooperative relationships - with funding agencies, with community organizations and with the people you are serving - as a basis for the development of your fundable initiatives. The Guide is built b

Key Sections of a Funding Proposal

1. Project Title/Cover Page
2. Project Overview
3. Background Information/Statement of the Problem
4. Project Detail
     a. Goals and Objectives
     b. Clientele
     c. Methods
     d. Staff/Administration
5. Available Resources
6. Needed Resources
     a. Personnel
     b. Facilities
     c. Equipment/Supplies/Communication
     d. Budget
7. Evaluation Plan
8. Appendices

Proposal Writing Hints

1. Project Title/Cover Page

Check to see if the agency you have in mind has any specifications for the Title/Cover Page (often they have a required format).

Usually the Title/Cover Page includes signatures of key people in your organization (Department Head, Supervisor, Contracts Officer, etc.).

If your proposal is built on collaborating with other groups/organizations it is usually a good idea to include their names on the Title/Cover Page.

Your cover should look professional and neat. However, do not waste time using fancy report covers, expensive binding, or other procedures that may send the wrong message to the potential funding agency. You are trying to impress the potential funding

the same words, except in a different order. The project with Title #1 appears to be focused on Red Haired Musicians. The project with Title #2 appears to be focused on Musical Style Preference. However, both projects are the same! Make sure your words are in the correct order.

> Title #1 - Red Haired Musicians and their Preference for Musical Style

> Title #2 - Music Style Preference of Red Haired Musicians

Try to remove words from your title that really are not necessary for understanding. Title #1 has too many words. Title #2 is just as clear but with fewer words.

> Title #1 - The Systematic Development of a Local Initiative to Create a Learning Center for Community Education

> Title #2 - A Local Learning Center for Community Education

Try and use only a single sentence for your title. If the sentence is getting too long try removing some words. When all else fails try using a two part title with the parts separated by a colon (use only as a last resort!). Do not attempt to use the title as an abstract of your entire proposal.

2. Project Overview

Think of the Project Overview as an Executive Summary (the busy executive probably only has enough time to read your Overview - not the entire proposal). Be specific and concise. Do not go into detail on aspects of your proposal that are further clarified at a later point in your proposal.

The Project Overview should "paint a picture" of your proposal in the mind of the reader. It should establish the framework so that the rest of the proposal has a frame of reference.

Use the Project Overview to begin to show your knowledge of the organization from which you are requesting funds. Key concerns of the funding organization can be briefly identified in relation to your proposed project.

If you will be collaborating with other organizations make sure some of their interests are also highlighted in the Project Overview. This can assist in strengthening the collaboration by recognizing them at the very beginning of your proposal.

The best time to prepare the Project Overview is after you have completed the entire proposal (and you understand all aspects of your proposal very well). Let the Overview be your last piece of writing and then insert it at the beginning of your proposal.

Try to keep in mind that someone will be reviewing your proposal and you would like to have this person be very positive about what you have written. The Project Overview will probably form a strong impression in the mind of the reviewer. Work on your Project Overview so that you can avoid giving this person the opportunity to say things like:

> Not an original idea
> Rationale is weak
> Writing is vague
> Uncertain outcomes
> Does not have relevant experience
> Problem is not important
> Proposal is unfocused
> Project is too large

3. Background Information/Statement of the Problem

It may be easier to think of this section as a review of Relevant Literature. Cite previous projects and studies that are similar to what you are proposing. Show the funding agency that you know what you are proposing because you are familiar with what has preceded you.

Try to be careful in your use of language. It can be very helpful to have a friend, outside of your area of focus/expertise, read your proposal to make sure that the language is readable and minimizes the use of:

> jargon
> trendy or "in" words
> abbreviations
> colloquial expressions
> redundant phrases
> confusing language

Position your project in relation to other efforts and show how your project:
>   a) will extend the work that has been previously done,
>   b) will avoid the mistakes and/or errors that have been previously made,
>   c) will serve to develop stronger collaboration between existing initiatives, or
>   c) is unique since it does not follow the same path as previously followed.

Use the statement of the problem to

d. Staff/Administration

Use this section to describe the roles of the different people associated with your project and the importance of each.

Make sure to clarify how each of the roles are essential to the success of the project and how each role clearly relates to operationalizing the methods you have described.

So what do you say about your key people? To start, make sure you include name, title, experience, and qualifications. Include other information if you feel it is important to the success of your project.

The descriptions of your personnel should let the funding agency know that you have excellent people who are committed to the project. You are not asking the funding agency to "trust" you. The validity of

6. Needed Resources

a. Personnel

Refer back to your Staff/Administration section and identify those people by name who will actually be paid from the grant - these are the ones to be identified in this section

Include short descriptions of each of the people will be involved in your project and supported by the funding. The descriptions should clarify in the mind of the potential funding agency that these people

Coffee, cups, donuts or other "supplies" for morning and afternoon breaks are usually not included in the proposal. These are person (not project) expenses.

roposal:

	Year 2	Year 3

roposal:

| | Year 2 | Year 3 |

Try to include both a concern for formative evaluation/process evaluation (ways to gain feedback on the project while it is being conducted) and summative evaluation/product evaluation (ways to show that the project fulfilled that which was originally proposed). Another way of conceptualizing this is that formative evaluation/process evaluation is concerned with the activities of the project. On the other hand, summative evaluation/product evaluation is concerned with the stated objectives of the project.

It is easy to create a summative evaluation/product evaluation plan if you have done a good job of clearly stating your project objectives or expected outcomes.

Make direct reference to your objectives in your evaluation plan. This creates a strong sense of integration/consistency within your proposal. The reader of your proposal will now be hearing the same message repeated in different sections of your proposal.

Try creating two separate evaluation plans - one for formative evaluation and the other for summative evaluation.

A good evaluation plan should include some sense of concern for what goes on following the conclusion of the funding period. How will the initiatives that have been started under the project be sustained? Have new things occurred that will be continued in the future? How will other cooperating agencies assist in continuing the project after the conclusion of the funding period? These and other areas should be included in a viable evaluation plan.

8. Appendices

Appendices should be devoted to those aspects of your project that are of secondary interest to the reader. Begin by assuming that the reader will only have a short time to read your proposal and it will only be the main body of your proposal (not the Appendices). Then, assume that you have gotten the attention of the reader who would now like some additional information. This is the purpose of the Appendices.

Here are some possible sections to include in the Appendices:

Dissemination Plan - An important aspect of your proposal will be the plan for disseminating information of/from the project to other audiences. Most funding agencies are interested in seeing how their financial support of your project will extend to other audiences. This may include newsletters, workshops, radio broadcasts, presentations, printed handouts, slide shows, training programs, etc. If you have an advisory group involved with your project they can be very helpful in disseminating project information to other audiences.

Time Line - A clear indication of the time frame for the project and the times when each aspect of the project will be implemented. Try creating the time line as a graphic representation (not too many words). If done well, it will help demonstrate the feasibility of the project in a very visible way.

Letters of Support - Funding agencies would like to know that others feel strongly enough about your project that they are willing to write a letter in support of the project. Talk through with the potential letter writers the sort of focus that you think will be important for their letter. (Try and draw on the reputation of the letter writing group.) Do not get pushed into writing the letters for the agencies - they will all sound alike and will probably defeat your purpose of using them. The letters must be substantive. If not, do not use them! Have the letters addressed directly to the funding agency. (Do not use a general "To Whom It May Concern" letter - it makes it appear that you are applying to many different potential funding agencies and are using the same letter for each. This may really be the case, so make sure you personalize each letter to the specific potential funding agency.)

Cooperating Agency Descriptions - If you have referenced in your proposal different cooperating agencies that you will be working with, it is a good idea to provide a more detailed description of each of these agencies in the appendices. Rather than include large descriptions of each cooperating agency, a single page that gives the name/address of the agency, names of key personnel, and brief descriptions of the major services provided is sufficient. Try and prepare

each of these single page descriptions so they follow a similar outline/presentation of information.

Evaluation Instrument - Include a draft copy of the actual evaluation instrument you plan to use (survey, questionnaire, interview guide, etc.) This will let your prospective funding agency know that you are serious about making evaluation an integral part of your project - and funding agencies like to hear this! Indicate DRAFT at the top of the instrument and then make it look as real as possible. Never say things like, "I think I may have a question that deals with...", or "Four or five questions will be included that examine the concern of...". If you will be using an interview procedure or a focus group discussion, include a draft copy of the specific questions that will actually be used for the interview/ discussion.

A Proposal Example

A Community-Based Mothers and Infants Center

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A community-based mothers and infants center called "Healthy Moms for Healthy Kids" (Pusat Ibu dan Anak Sihat or PIAS) will be established in Kota Emessu, the city surrounding the Universitas Pembangunan Pertanian (UNPEMP). PIAS will focus on providing nutritional education and counseling for mothers, especially those from the extremely low income areas. It is expected that through the providing of information to the mothers that it will be possible to have a direct and positive effect on the well-being of the young children of the community.

The use of volunteers to provide community service is a new concept in Malnesia and can be capitalized upon as a viable way to provide talented manpower for the offering of educational services. The first student service scheme, Service Mahasiswa/SERMAH, was created in the early 1990s. Initially operated at only two universities, SERMAH is now a mandated national program that operates at all public and private universities (Directorate for Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Statistics for 1996). The emphasis of SERMAH has been exclusively on the providing of information to local farmers on improved farming practices. The Universitas Pembangunan Pertanian has been funded by the Ministry of Agriculture to operate the SERMAH Educational Development Center (Introducing SERMAH, Ministry of Agriculture, 1996) as a central agency for the providing of farming practices instructional materials to all universities in Malnesia. The selection and training of student volunteers is conducted autonomously at each university with the support of the instructional materials disseminated by the SERMAH Educational Development Center.

PROJECT DETAIL

Goals and Objectives

Clientele

There are two different clientele groups for this project.

The first, and primary, clientele are the mothers of young children who live in Kota Emessu. This clientele group is represented in the project objectives for Goal #1.

The second clientele group are the students at Universitas Pembangunan Pertanian who will participate in the Project as volunteers. This clientele group is represented in the project objectives for Goal #2.

Both clientele groups are important and essential components of this project. It is expected that significant learning will take place for both clientele groups.

Methods

The primary methods for achieving the goals and objectives of the Project will be:

the creation of a Center in the city that will become a focal point for providing information on food and nutrition for young children through workshops and one-on-one counseling of mothers, and the development of a recruitment/training program and supervised practicum for student volunteers that is modeled after the SERMAH program.
In addition, a Documentation/Dissemination Plan will be developed by staff to guarantee the systematic collection of information about the operation of the Project and provide the basis for sharing information with other similar projects.

Staff/Administration

The Project will employ three full-time and three part time staff.

> Project Director (full time)- Responsible for hiring project staff, overseeing project development and operation, establishing and maintaining links with local government agencies, and budget. The Project Director will be Harjono Soemadji (author of this proposal)

> Center Coordinator (full time)- Responsible for establishing the community Center, developing working relationships with formal and informal community leaders, establishing links to community women's organizations, and scheduling of Center programs.

> Volunteer Coordinator (full time) - Responsible for recruiting university student volunteers, establishing and maintaining a working linkage with the UNPEMPER Department of Food and Nutrition, developing and offering training programs for volunteers, scheduling volunteers for service at the Center. The Volunteer Coordinator will have a background in food and nutrition and will be housed in the Department of Food and Nutrition.

> Project Evaluator (part time) - Responsible for collecting entry level data regarding mother's health and nutrition information and conducting periodic assessment of changes in their level of knowledge, comprehension and application of that information. Also responsible for developing and implementing a system for periodic formative evaluation

of the work of the student volunteers.

Budget -

Year 1 - Development of Center Operation and Recruitment/Training of First Group of Student Volunteers

Personnel M$387,000
Project Director Full time - 12 months M$127,000
Center Coordinator Full time - 12 months M$85,000
Volunteer Coordinator* Full time - 12 months M$42,000
Project Evaluator Part time - 12 months M$49,000
Center Assistant Part time - 12 months M$42,000
Graphic Artist Part time - 12 months M$42,000

*Note: Volunteer Coordinator is currently a 50% staff member of the Department of Food and Nutrition. The Project will pay the other 50% of this person's salary to bring her up to 100%.

Development/Production of Educational Materials M$39,000
Advertising/Promotion M$17,500
Evaluation M$8,500
YEAR ONE TOTAL M$452,000

Year 2 - Operation/Maintenance of Center and Recruitment/Training of Two Student Volunteer Groups

Personnel (assumes 3% yearly increment) M$398,610
Production of Educational Materials M$6,000
Advertising/Promotion M$4,000
Evaluation M$3,000
YEAR TWO TOTAL M$412,000

Year 3 and beyond (assume 3% yearly increment on Year 2 budget)

YEAR THREE TOTAL M$424,000

EVALUATION PLAN

Project evaluation will be the responsibility of the Project Evaluator and consist of two different evaluative strategies - formative and summative.

Formative Evaluation - Primarily qualitative in nature, the formative evaluation will be conducted through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Mothers and student volunteers will be asked about the day-to-day operation of the Center, the topics covered in the volunteer training program, the attractiveness of the training materials, and other questions to provide feedback for the ongoing improvement of the operation of the Project. The Project Evaluator will meet regularly with project staff to share findings from the formative evaluation effort. Periodic reports will be prepared that identify the major findings of the formative evaluation and how they have been used to improve Project operation.

Month Four - Six

        Preliminary advertising of Center operation
        Hosting community meetings at Center

Publications Center, Univetas Pembangunan Pertanian, 1995.

Soemadji, Harjono, The Problem of Malnutrition Amongst Children in the Kota Emessu Region, Paper presented at the 15th Annual Meeting of the Southeast Asian Health Conference (SEAHEC), 1996.

Soemadji, Harjono and Soemardi Hadisubroto, Unde

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