

Standard Proposal Outline (from the Foundation Center)

Executive Summary – Four to six paragraphs, typically written at the end of the process, that serves a number of purposes. One, it tells the funder whether or not the proposal fits the guidelines. Two, it's the organization's opportunity to catch the eye of the funders and inspire them to read further. Three, it's the writer's opportunity to emphasize the key points.

- Problem – a brief statement of the problem or need (one to two paragraphs)
- Solution – a short description of the project that includes what will take place, the benefit, how and where it will operate / work, for how long and who will staff it (one to two paragraphs)
- Funding requirements – an explanation of the amount of money required for the project and future funding plans (one paragraph)
- Organization and its expertise - name, history, purpose, activities and capacity to carry out the proposal (one paragraph)

Statement of Need – Three paragraphs that allow the reader to learn more about the issues, presents the facts and evidence that support the need for the project and establishes that your non-profit understands and can address the problem.

- Use accurate, specific facts / data to support the project and illustrate the need.
- Provide an example that hits home.
- Provide hope (i.e. don't just talk about how bad run-off from development, emphasize what can be done about it)
- Put a human face on it, provide real life examples and emphasize the needs of those served

Project Description – Nuts and bolts of the project

- Describe the project in a way that is interesting / compelling
- Five sections –
 - o Objectives - Define measurable improvements in behavior, performance, process or a tangible item that will result from the project.
 - o Methods - A detailed description of the activities leading to achieving the objectives that includes how, when (project timeline), and why the methods will work.
 - o Staffing / Administration – A short description of the number of staff, their qualifications and what they will be doing.
 - o Evaluation – A description of how the organization and the funder will know the project is a success. What methods will be used to evaluate success? What types of measures – qualitative or quantitative? Remember that success is not just completing a list of activities...what is the impact of the activity on achieving the objectives? Who will measure success?
 - o Sustainability – Since funders rarely want to make a long term commitment to one organization, they want to know that the project will attract other funders. Evidence of current funding (for larger projects) is helpful and may be requested.

Budget- Provide a summary of direct and indirect expenses, as well as anticipated revenue, for the completion of the project. For ease of understanding, this summary is usually in the form of a chart and includes narrative to explain anything unusual.

Organizational Information – History, mission, project fit within the mission, structure, programs and expertise, board, activities, staff, audience served, special needs of audience, why we are needed, and number of people reached through our programs. (one to two pages, maximum)

Conclusion – A concluding paragraph or two that is used to make a final pitch for the project.

Standard Proposal Letter Outline (a short version of the full length proposal)

- Ask for the gift – why you are writing and the funding request
- Describe the need
- Explain what you will do
- Provide organizational data
- Budget data
- Appendices, as appropriate