

Writing a Winning Grant Proposal – Summary and Resource List

Section (length)	Expected	What would make this Exceptional
<p>Letter of Inquiry (LOI) (1 page)</p>	<p>Requests the opportunity to write a full proposal.</p> <p>The first sentence states: Who we are and what we do. What we want. What we want it for.</p> <p>The rest supports all of that and touches on measurable objectives.</p> <p>It is a letter, so address and sign it.</p>	<p>Can be read and completely understood by the reviewer in seconds.</p> <p>Primary focus is on the measurable objectives, which are really the ROI for the funder.</p> <p>Don't beg or plead for money. This is a business partnership.</p>
<p>Executive Summary (1 page)</p> <p><i>The first thing read by a grant reviewer, and often the only thing read for the first round.</i></p>	<p>Good summary of proposal</p> <p>Gives more info than LOI on measurable objectives and methodology</p> <p>Includes the funding amount and what it will be used for</p>	<p>Flows seamlessly from first informative paragraph to a brief need statement (para. 2) to objectives and methodology (para. 3-4), to the summary paragraph.</p> <p>Comprehensive, yet compact with crisp and clear writing that shows the program fits the funder's goals.</p> <p><i>You should be able to reconstruct your proposal using the Executive Summary.</i></p>

Writing a Winning Grant Proposal – Summary and Resource List

Section (length)	Expected	What would make this Exceptional
Introduction – (1 page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce your organization in terms relevant to the grant opportunity. • Establish credibility and illuminate your accomplishments. • Provide mission and vision statements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use demographic or socioeconomic data to show why your organization exists. • List relevant awards received. • Expand on mission and vision statements to bring them to life. Most are boring, so make sure yours are not. • Overlap your project goals with the funder’s goals. • If you are new to the grant game, it’s OK, but never try to beef up your introduction to make you into something you are not. Be honest, highlight staff capabilities and creative solutions to problems or issues.
Goal Statement and Objectives (½ page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A goal that is ambitious but achievable. • SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, Time bound) objectives that lead to your goal. • At the end of your project, objectives tell you the degree to which you were successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has 3-5 strong objectives. • Objective describes <i>who</i> is going to do <i>what</i>, <i>when</i> they are going to do it, and <i>how</i> it will be measured. • Exceptional objectives do a good job of measuring.

Writing a Winning Grant Proposal – Summary and Resource List

Section (length)	Expected	What would make this Exceptional
Needs Statement (1½ pages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is realistic – doesn't try to solve the world's problems. • Makes funder confident you understand the problem. • Shows importance but doesn't convey unsolvable gloom and doom. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quotes valid and up-to-date research. • Shows the problem on a wide scale all the way to local scale (inverted triangle) • Objectives are directly related to the need. • Has a mix of research—standard print references, online, quotes, graphics, reputable authorities, or even popular opinions. • Leaves the reviewer with the opinion that if he/she ever needs more information on the topic of your mission, you would be the logical organization to call.
Methods (3 pages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be a complete roadmap of your program. • Each method leads to the completion of one objective. (Explains the activities you will use to achieve the objectives.) • Includes day-to-day responsibilities; implementation and management personnel, timelines, facilities, and how the clients are selected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods are economical and achieve objectives in the most cost-efficient manner. • Sufficient division of labor – including internal, external and new staff that will be needed - so that no one individual is burdened with the bulk of the work. • Include job descriptions or CVs (as appendices) • Timelines are realistic and based on milestones and, if possible, periodic reviews are built in to make project adjustments.

Writing a Winning Grant Proposal – Summary and Resource List

Section (length)	Expected	What would make this Exceptional
Evaluation (1 page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Valid methods are used to evaluate progress toward objectives. • Ties into the Needs Statement and objectives so that results can be used to further understand the problem. • Includes a plan for disseminating the results. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation techniques are both valid and creative. • Designed by someone with evaluation expertise. • Includes how the project will be monitored, and how/what people will learn from the project’s accomplishment. • Very specific about how results will be shared—white paper, published research, articles, etc.—and has targeted publications already listed.
Existing and Future Funding (½ page)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists other sources of funding for your program • Lists methods for seeking additional funding • Shows that you understand the importance of sustainability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows investment by others or by your own organization • Includes in-kind contributions as well • Discusses relationships developed, and possible funding routes with gov., industry leaders, philanthropists, large corps, etc. • Realistic plan for sustainability that is creative, and stresses that sustainability is the goal.
Budget and Budget Narrative (1½ pages)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accurately reflects your project • Avoids forbidden costs and large amounts under vague categories like “Contingency” or “Miscellaneous” • Separates personnel from non-personnel costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows what the funder will provide, and what you and others will provide • Is easy for non-financial people to read • Provides fuller picture of the budget with revenue and expenses • Include periodic examination of variances between budget/actual expenses, and a plan to make corrections.

Writing a Winning Grant Proposal – Summary and Resource List

Grant researching resources, online courses and other grants resources:

- Foundationcenter.org – online database, tutorials, articles, tools
- Grantspace.org – Foundation Center’s learning community
- Guidestar.org – Information about non-profits including 990s
- GrantsAlert.com – education grants
- Grants.gov – federal grants
- Grantsmanship Center - <https://www.tgci.com/>
- VISTA Campus: Strategizing Your Funding Search: <https://www.vistacampus.gov/resources/strategizing-your-funding-search>
- The Complete Book of Grant Writing by Nancy Burke Smith & E. Gabriel Works
- Shaping Outcomes: <http://www.shapingoutcomes.org/> - Tutorial to help you plan to assess, build, evaluate and report on a program
- Fundraising and Grants courses at Nonprofit Ready (<https://www.nonprofitready.org/course-categories?tid=50>)

Professional Networks:

- American Grant Writers Association
- Association for Fund Raising Professionals
- Local Grant Writers Networks