

Funding Proposal Development Tips

1. Do your homework

- Talk to funders.
- Look for mutual interests.
- Try to get the timing right.

Get out there and meet people:

You'll get better information about what the funders are really interested in if you actually talk to them. Do more than just read guidelines and annual reports. Pick up the phone and call, arrange a meeting.

Find mutual interests:

Look at the program from the donor's perspective and highlight the aspects that will appeal most, but don't twist yourself in knots to somehow appear to meet guidelines your organization clearly does not met.

Get the timing right:

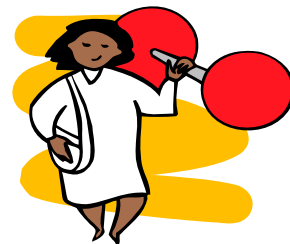
When you make personal contact with your prospects, try to get a sense of whether the time is right for a proposal.

2. Developing and Maintaining Your "Boilerplate" Document

The stuff about your organization that you can cut [X] and paste into almost every proposal.

Make a complete inventory of your strengths

- **What's special about your institution?**
 - Is it the biggest of its kind?
 - The oldest and most experienced?
 - The most successful? If so, in what way?
 - Does it improve the quality of life? How?
 - State how much better the community is because you exist?
 - Are people safer? Facts and figures, please!



- **If you're a new organization or you have a new idea:**
 - Have others given a grant already?
 - Has your board committed significant resources to this new effort?
 - Can you show that the entire community is behind your new effort?

3. Writing The Proposal

Writing a proposal is like proposing marriage!



- **Never appear “needy”**
Funders might wonder if anything of quality can be produced in a poverty-stricken offices.
- **Don't discuss your failures as “failures”**
If you must write about lessons learned, keep them to the ones that let you grow and realize your potential, not the ones that are making you sink.
- **Never appear too smart, too rich, or too good.**
Whether reading your copy or sitting across the table, donors want to look into a mirror. Make sure the mirror reflects who they are, with maybe a touch of who they want to be. Make yourself seem self-assured, stable, bright, positive, and all that other good stuff.

4. Tailor your strengths to your audience:

Put yourself in the place of the funders

- **If the potential funder is a corporation:**
Write efficiently, effectively, and use a business-like approach.



Did your board and staff work for a year on your thoughtful new strategic plan? Say so! –

If possible, get an outside seal of approval. Consider quoting from a glowing newspaper editorial, citing your high ranking by a respected civic group, or getting a solid testimonial from a distinguished Tribal leader.

Dig up some *indicators of high performance*. For example:

- How many smoke detectors did you distribute last year
- Describe how you have collaborated with law enforcement personnel
- Number of people who receive your newsletter?

5. Things you might be wondering about proposal development.

- How long should my proposal be?
(Long enough to secure funding.)
- How do I find time to write?
(You don't find time to write. You make time to write.)
- Does my proposal have to look fancy?
(Depends on who's reading it.)
- Isn't there an easy way to do this?
(No.)
- What's the best advice you have?
(Start early, network, and Simplify. Simplify. Simplify.)
- What's the second-best advice you have?
(Read everything you can get your hands on.)

**A WRITTEN PROPOSAL GIVES YOU
A CHANCE FOR EXTERNAL FUNDS.**

**AN EXCELLENT PROPOSAL
IMPROVES YOUR CHANCE OF FUNDING**

Books/Articles

Barbato, J. & Furlich, D. (2000). Writing for a Good Cause: The Complete Guide to Crafting Proposals and Other Persuasive Pieces for Nonprofits. New York, NY: Fireside Books.

Center for Community Change. Private-Sector Funding Sources. Retrieved on November 30, 2000, from the World Wide Web:
<http://www.communitychange.org/privfund.pdf>

Coley, S. & Scheinberg, C. (2000). Proposal Writing, Second Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Davidson, W. (1994). Business Writing: What Works, What Won't. New York, NY: St. Martin's Griffin.

Klein, K. (2001). Fund Raising for Social Change. Oakland, CA: Chardon Press.

Klein, K. (yr?). Ask and You Shall Receive: A Fundraising Training Program for Religious Organizations and Projects. Jossey-Bass.

Klein, K. (2000). Fundraising for the Long Haul. Oakland, CA: Chardon Press.

Ries, J. & Leukefeld, C. (1997). Applying for Research Funding: Getting Started and Getting Funded. Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Robinson, A. (1996). Grassroots Grants.

Sagawa, S. & Segal, E. (2000). Common Interest Common Good: Creating Value Through Business and Social Sector Partnerships. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Internet Resources for Proposal Preparation

- Grant Getters' Guide: <http://www.nonprofit.net/info/guide.html>
- US Dept./ of Education: What Should I Know About Education Grants
<http://www.ed.gov/fund/landing.jhtml?src=ln>
- EPA online grant writing tutorial:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/outdoors/naturewatch/start/partnerships/EPA-grant-writing-tutorial.pdf> (large file...4.5MB)