



How to Write Winning Foundation Proposals

Dr. Karl Hamner
Nursing and Social Work

Dr. David Hardy
Education





Feast and Famine


➤ Feast

- ❖ In 2011 the nearly 82,000 foundations in the U.S. gave away \$49 billion. The government gave out hundreds of billions more.

- ❖ <http://foundationcenter.org/media/news/20131001.html>

➤ Famine

- ❖ Getting grant money has never been more competitive because of cuts in federal and state budgets and the economic downturn.



➤ “Each year the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds about *one in seven* (or 15 percent) of the proposals submitted that are not part of our competitive National Programs ... Even though a proposal may fit our goals and interest areas, many excellent projects are not funded simply because of the volume of proposals we receive.”

- <http://www.rwjf.org/applications/independent/overview.jhtml>

Why you?

- Ultimately, a grant proposal is a sales pitch. You are trying to convince a person or organization with money to give it to you instead of them.
- Although the need for your program may seem self-evident to you, you are almost always competing against equally good causes or equally important research.
- Explanations of your mission, target population, the core competencies of key personnel, and the impact your program will have help reviewers see why **you** are the more capable applicant!



Why Them? Selecting the Right Funder

- *Proactive* selection of potential funding sources equals greater success!
 - ❖ How does your proposed program or project help the funder's mission? Be sure to spell out the connection between your objectives and impact and the specific reason for the Request for Proposals.
 - ❖ Are you eligible?
 - ❖ How much, what, and when do they fund?

“Let your mission bring the money, not the money drive your mission.”

- Write from your strengths and plan your grant proposal carefully!
- Be proactive instead of reactive.
- Successful proposals are clearly consistent with the primary agency's mission and are tied clearly to the experiences and past successes of the primary agency, the personnel involved.

Beware of What You Wish For!

- When you get the grant, will you say:
 - ❖ “*Oh, boy! We got the grant!*”
 - Or ...
 - ❖ “*Oh, *%!*! We got the grant!*”
- Be sure your grant writing efforts are aligned with your mission and vision and that you have the capacity to implement the grant!
- If you are looking for a program grant, especially from a foundation, clear it with the Powers That Be *prior* to writing and submitting!

The 3 “Cs” of Grant Writing[©]

➤ **Clear**

- ❖ Write clearly and understandably, and have an easily followed logic leading the reader from the problem to the solution.

➤ **Concise**

- ❖ Write as succinctly as possible – readers usually have multiple proposals to review and will start to skim lengthy or verbose prose.

➤ **Compelling**

- ❖ Make a strong case about the broad impact of your program or research – funders want the best bang for their buck!

Planning Model for Grant Proposal Preparation (12-Week Time Frame)©

Task	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. ID Need & Response: ID key need/hypothesis; ID partners; Hold strategy meetings with key staff												
2. Logic Modeling: Define key activities, targets, outcomes, etc.												
3. Draft Logic Model: ID outcomes for Evaluation Plan												
4. Draft Proposal Outline/Sections: ID authors, format, page limits, etc., for individual sections; Draft budget; Teaming Agreements / MOUs; Evaluation plan draft												
5. Formalize “Elevator Pitch”: Letter of Intent/ Purpose Statement; Begin searching for funding sources, RFP's												
6. Develop Funding Matrix: Sort potential funders by fit, \$ amount, due date, etc.												
7. Initial Funder Contact: Send out Letters of Intent; Contact Program Manager												
8. Revise Proposal for Funder: Collect Letters Of Support; Develop Evaluation Plan/ GPRA data plan												
9. Documentation: Letters of Support; Bios/info on principals; Appendix materials, etc.												
10. Assemble Final Draft: Internal Review Process												
11. Plan/Submit Proposal: Submit electronic/hard copy with enough time for troubleshooting												
12. Troubleshoot Submission: Identify/fix any problems/missing materials in submission, especially for electronic submissions												



Common Elements of a Grant Application

- Some elements of an application will be required by virtually all funders.
- Some elements will be unique to a particular agency.



Opening Statement

- Open up with a 2-sentence problem-solution statement.
- Make this shine! This is the most important thing you are going to write.

Abstract/Summary

- Every proposal will require a concise and informative abstract or summary.
 - Make this shine! It is the first thing reviewers read and often is the part from which they decide to fund or not fund!
- HRSA on your abstract:
 - “Provide a summary of the application. Because the abstract is often distributed to provide information to the public and Congress, please prepare this so that it is clear, accurate, concise and without reference to other parts of the application. It must include a brief description of the proposed grant project including the needs to be addressed, the proposed services, the population group(s) to be served, the number of participants per year, and the project goal(s).”

Background/Need

➤ **What is the problem?**

- ❖ Define the global nature of the problem, and discuss the individual, social, and economic impact of the problem you are trying to address.


➤ **Whom/what does this problem affect?**

- ❖ Narrow down to the specific population you serve. How are they impacted, and why do they need special attention?

Program Description/Research Plan

➤ This section includes several elements:

- ❖ Describe the broad *Strategy* you will employ to address this problem. Explain your planning process and why you chose your specific approach.
- ❖ Detail the overall *Goals* and specific *Objectives* you seek to accomplish.
- ❖ Lay out the specific *Activities* you will undertake, and how these activities will contribute to the achievement of your goals – include a work plan clearly linked to your strategy.
- ❖ Explain the anticipated *Outcomes* of your activities, including a rationale connecting your activities to your outcomes and how these result in your goals.



➤ ***Program Goals*** – Broad statements of long-range purpose or intent that are more encompassing/global and provide overall direction for the program

- ❖ To reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease in Franklin County.
- ❖ To stop the spread of HIV in the youth of Indiana.



➤ ***Program Objectives*** – More precise, measurable steps that lead to the program goals

❖ By the year 2010, heart disease deaths will be reduced to no more than 100 per 100,000 residents of Franklin County.

Good Objectives are SMART Objectives

- ***Specific*** – What are the actual activities needed to attain the desired goal and who will engage in them?
- ***Measurable*** – Good objectives incorporate concise, measurable terms such as increase/decrease (use active verbs such as *apply, build, exhibit, perform, etc.*).
- ***Attainable*** – Good objectives consider available resources and time frames.
- ***Realistic*** – Good objectives think small and possible.
- ***Time Specific*** – Good objectives are time specific.

Sample SMART Objectives

- During the next six months, 300 community residents will participate in one of the health department's health promotion activities.
- After the American Heart Association's pamphlet on cardiovascular health risk factors has been placed in grocery bags, at least 20% of shoppers will be able to identify two of their own risks.

Impact – *Why This?*

- This is your *primary sales pitch!* What broad impact will your program have?
 - ❖ Connect the reviewer back to big picture issues in which the funder is interested by drawing the connection between your mission, the program, and the purpose of the funds.
 - ❖ Explain the lasting change or advance on organizational efficiency, clinical practice, community or other relevant “big picture” issues.

Agency/Individual Description

- **This is crucial to answering “*Why you?*” –What sets you apart from the competition?**
 - ❖ Faced with equally important and well thought-out programs or research, reviewers will fund the more capable applicant .
 - ❖ Explain how your agency came into being. Describe your mission, target population, the core competencies of key personnel, and any special assets or resources you bring to the table.
 - ❖ For research, describe both your own background and expertise *and* the capacity and facilities of your department/ agency.

Relevance – *Why Them?*

- **This is one of the first cutting points for reviewers – *How does your plan fit the impact they want their money to have?***
 - ❖ *Do not* assume this is as obvious to the reader as it is to you; spell it out for them. They want you to make the case for helping you.
 - ❖ Explain how the program relates to their areas of interest. If they have more than one funding initiative, they will want you to explain which one this program falls under, and why.



➤ The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation seeks to improve the health and health care of all Americans. To achieve the most impact with our funds, we prioritize our grants into four goal areas:

- ❖ *To assure that all Americans have access to quality health care at reasonable cost.*
- ❖ *To improve the quality of care and support for people with chronic health conditions.*
- ❖ *To promote healthy communities and lifestyles.*
- ❖ *To reduce the personal, social and economic harm caused by substance abuse—tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs.*

Collaboration

- Describe how you work with others to meet your mission or achieve your scientific objectives.
- How do you fit in to the service environment?
 - ❖ With whom are you working and have collaborative agreements? Interdisciplinary teams are both often more effective and desired by funders.
 - ❖ Explain how your program fits into the overall constellation of services/programs affecting your target population.
 - ❖ What other agencies in your area provide similar services, and do you coordinate with them?



HRSA on Impact*:

- Provide detailed information on how your proposal will affect the targeted population or study area.
- Think like a Reviewer. Reviewers rate and score many applications—make your proposal stand out.
- Provide statistics (when possible).
- Don't gold plate, pad or overemphasize. Speak truth and facts.
- Show how valuable and necessary your project will be.

<http://www.hrsa.gov/grants/apply/TechnicalAssistance/tipsforgoodgr>

Sustainability

- **Explain how the program or research will be sustained or followed-up beyond the grant period.**
 - ❖ Your funding agency will understand that these plans are speculative before the fact, but explain your ideas for keeping the program going.
 - ❖ No one wants to fund something that will not last beyond their direct funding.
 - ❖ More funders are shifting to funding programs that solve problems rather than treat symptoms.

Budget

- **Every grant proposal will require some form of budget.**
 - ❖ For initial approaches, such as Letters of Intent, you may just have to explain how much money you want and how it will be used in general.
 - ❖ Usually a line-item budget is required explaining the total and subtotal of funds to be used for specific purposes. Matching or in-kind donations should be listed. Multi-year grants include subsequent years showing the changing amounts for each category. A written justification for each item is common. Be specific about what is covered by the grant, and what you will fund through other sources.

HRSA Budget Justification*

- Provide a narrative that explains the amounts requested for each line in the budget. The budget justification should specifically describe how each item will support the achievement of proposed objectives.
- The budget justification must clearly describe each cost element and explain how each cost contributes to meeting the project's objectives/goals.
- The budget justification **MUST** be concise. Do **NOT** use the justification to expand the project narrative.

*Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) Program;
HRSA-10-042

Budget Tips


- Bad math can kill a proposal! Why would someone trust you with their money if you can't add?
- Double check all your numbers and don't just rely on the spreadsheet to add for you!
- Your budget should reflect exactly what you propose – include all items with detailed explanations of the cost and don't introduce any unexplained items.
- Include items donated (In-Kind) or paid for (Matching) by other sources.
- If relevant, describe the economic benefits to the target population.

Evaluation and Reporting

- **Include an evaluation plan – it shows funders you are serious about program management and impact.**
 - ❖ How will you determine if you have achieved the goals you set?
 - ❖ What outcomes will you measure?
 - ❖ What specific data will you collect and how will it be collected?
 - ❖ What criteria for success will be used?
 - ❖ What will you do with the report?

What is a Logic Model?

- The term "logic model" comes from the evaluation field, but these models don't just belong to evaluators or the evaluation plan. Logic models are a basic element of programming that communicates the logic behind a program, its rationale.
- ❖ A logic model's purpose is to communicate the underlying "theory" or set of assumptions or hypotheses that program proponents have about why the program will work, or about why it is a good solution to an identified problem.



➤ Logic models can come in all shapes and sizes: boxes with connecting lines that are read from left to right (or top to bottom); circular loops with arrows going in or out; or other visual metaphors and devices.

- ❖ What these schemata have in common are they attempt to show the links in a chain of reasoning about "what causes what," in relationship to the desired outcome or goal. The desired outcome or goal is usually shown as the last link in the model.

Benefits of a Logic Model

- A logic model develops understanding.
- A logic model helps to monitor progress.
- A logic model serves as the evaluation framework.
- A logic model helps to reveal assumptions.
- A logic model helps to restrain over-promising.
- A logic model promotes communication.



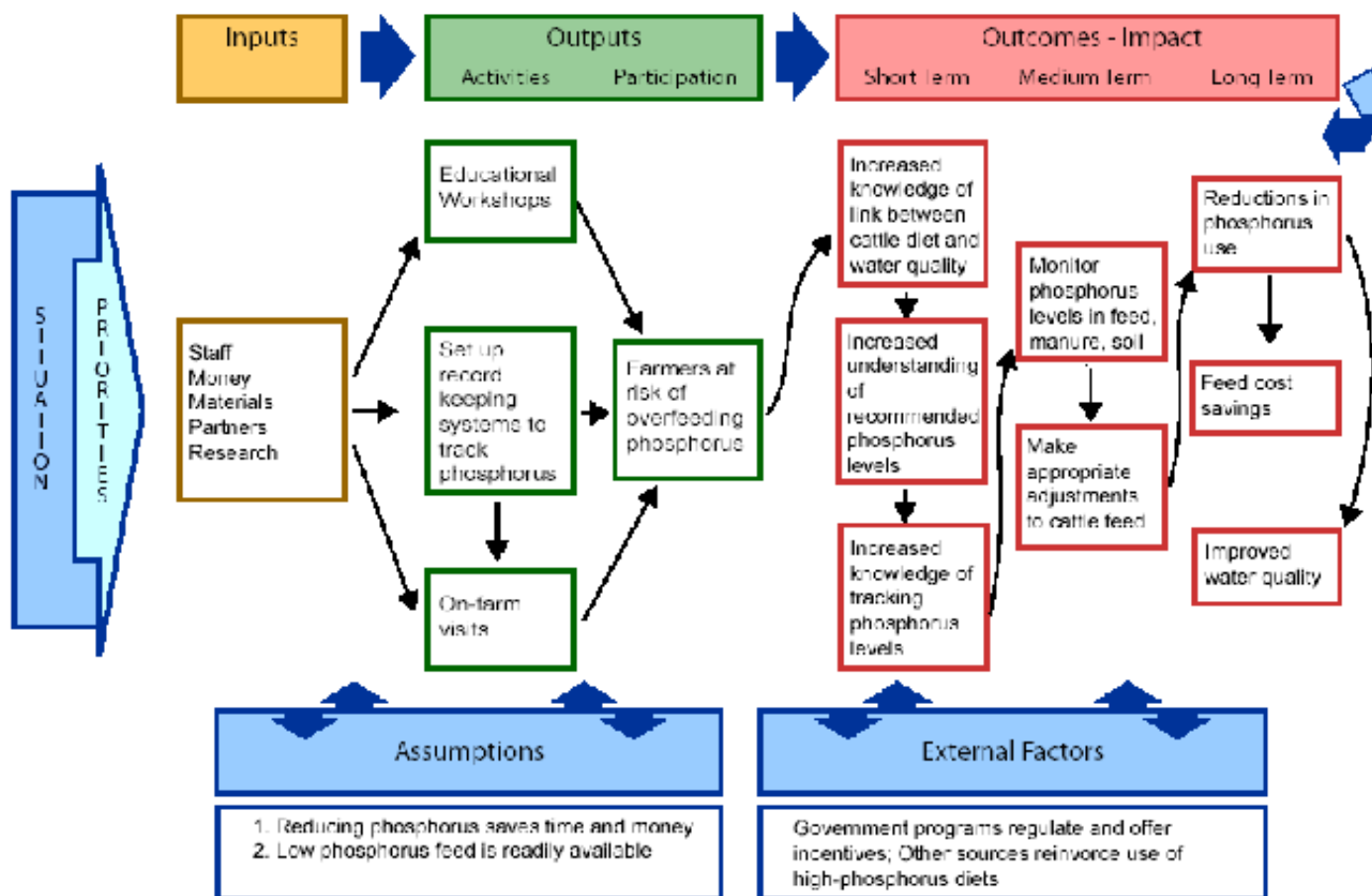
Program Logic Model

Resources	Activities	Target Group	Short Term Outcomes	Long Term Impacts

Sample HRSA Rural Health Network Development Grant Work Plan Matrix

Goals	Strategies/ Activities	Activities	Outputs or Outcomes	How Measured	Performance Period	Responsible Person(s)
Develop a Board of Directors	Develop Board responsibilities Identify Board Makeup	a. Determine the size of the board b. Identify a person from each organization that will be on the board and a backup person who can make decisions for the network organizations c. Determine the number of and Dates for the Board Meetings d. Hold Board Meeting	1. Ensure collaboration from all network partners. 2. Ensure equal oversight of the project.	1. Number of Board Meetings 2. Numbers of Board Members attending the Board Meetings or sending a backup person.	3/1/2011 – 7/31/2012	Project Director Network Members
Develop Mission Statement	Hire Consultant Convene Network Members	a. Identify the common health care services strategies b. Create an overarching statement that identifies the network's beliefs and goals			8/1/2011 – 2/28/2012	Project Director Consultant Board of Directors Network Members

Logic Model: Water Quality Program



TITLE PAGE EXERCISE

A title should reflect the benefits of the proposal. The title should be short (10 to 13) words, and descriptive, and leave little doubt about the benefits of funding this proposal. Grant seekers that try to entice the reader into looking at their proposal by using a "catchy" title, run the risk of not having their proposal read at all, or creating a false expectation of what the proposal will deal with.

Read the following title, making a note of what you think each project is about. If you were a funding source, would you understand the benefits of investing in each of these projects?

- A. PROJECT WOMAN! - War on Math Anxiety Now!
 - B. PROJECT MOVE - Maximizing Options in Vocational Education
 - C. Helping Our Elderly Eat Better
 - D. Project "76"
 - E. Wheels on Wheels
 - F. Adoption in North Carolina - Old Problem and New Solution
 - G. A Project to Build Support Groups for Ethnic Alzheimer's Groups
 - H. H.D.P.'s - The Missing Link in Health Care
-

SAMPLE SUMMARY

SUMMARY: HELPING THE HEARING-IMPAIRED LEAD MORE NORMAL LIVES

One out of every twelve children is born with a hearing defect. And until recently, most recently, most of them have had a bleak future. Why? Because a child's inability to hear at an early age makes it impossible for the child to develop normally - to keep up with normal children.

The EAR Center, one of the leaders in the fight to overcome childhood hearing defects, has developed a new technology called "Sensory Integration Therapy". Using techniques and equipment developed at the EAR Center, we will conduct a pilot program of this therapy to help a group of hearing-impaired children:

- learn to use other senses to compensate for hearing impairment;
- improve visual, tactile, and motor skills; and
- progress more quickly in language skills.

This unique pilot project has the potential to help thousands of deaf and hearing-impaired children develop more like normal children - and lead more normal lives in the years to come.

Because of the Zellerbach Foundation's proven interest in helping the handicapped, we are requesting \$20,000 towards this project. This represents the cost of providing a year of sensory integration therapy for ten children. We hope to begin therapy on the first child in January of 2008. The cost of this project is \$97,350.

PROBLEM/NEED STATEMENT WORKSHEET

Many studies indicate the need for progress that deals with the problem of alcohol abuse and the operation of automobiles. Since many people drink to excess at a variety of hours, individuals may be impaired at various hours of the day or night. Last year alone, the number of arrests for driving while intoxicated during daylight hours grew by 20%.

Mercy Hospital has a tremendous need for renovating our four-bed wards, providing in-room oxygen, and renovating our floor nurses' stations. You should see our aides wheeling oxygen down the hall for a patient who has suffered a coronary. The nurses' stations are 40 years old and look it.

INTRODUCTION WORKSHEET

Re-write the following introduction.

The Metropolitan Hospice was founded in 2000 with the express purpose of aiding the terminally ill, their family and friends, and the community through services that provide for understanding, acceptance and treatment for people who will never recover from their illness. We have a fully staffed hospice for these terminally ill individuals but prefer to promote home health care techniques that save money and provide a familiar environment for the patient.

Six Things You Can Do To Help Your Proposal Make The First Cut

1. Write a compelling summary.

What if you knew that huge sums of money, perhaps a month or two of your organization's payroll, were riding on 200 or 400 words? Wouldn't you pay scrupulous attention to that writing? Your proposal will only get read if the summary provides a reason for the program officer to dig deeper. Fuss over the summary until it sparkles.

2. List concrete, specific outcomes of your work.

People want to know exactly what they are going to get for their money. That's why so many of the things we buy come in transparent packaging. Your proposal should be a clear container that shows exactly what will result from the funder's investment. Concrete measurable results provide core reasons for funders to support you.

3. Connect each step of your work with your goals.

Many proposals fail to show how specific actions will lead directly to meeting goals. Strong proposals are like railroad bridges – they have steel girders connecting every point. Most often, proposal writers fail to make those connections because the relationship between what they want and what they do seems obvious to them. It needs to be spelled out.

4. Present a budget in standard format that is legible and patently sensible.

People who have never used a spreadsheet as well as those who live and breathe spreadsheets can be equally injurious to explaining your money plan. Spreadsheet jockeys need to be kept from creating dense forests of tiny numbers. But also don't let someone take their maiden spreadsheet voyage creating the budget that will be vetted by a foundation's experts. And make sure everything in the proposal is accounted for in the budget. Conversely, omit items in the budget that are not fully explained in the proposal narrative.

5. Get the proposal in early.

Ostentatiously beating the deadline gives the impression that you can plan well and get things done. The reality of foundation deadlines is that if your proposal arrives early, it will stand out, because most proposals arrive at the last moment.

6. Offer to meet. Once.

Let the funder know you would be glad to come by and talk about your work, and if appropriate, bring other staff or board members. If the funder says OK, set up the meeting on their terms. If they're reluctant, let it drop, so you don't provide a reason for the funder to stop taking your calls.



Excerpted, with permission, from "Thank You for Submitting Your Proposal," by Martin Teitel, copyright 2006 Emerson & Church, Publishers. All rights reserved.

To order the book, call (508) 359-0019 or visit www.emersonandchurch.com

Seven Reasonably Easy Things You Can Do to Improve Your Proposal

1. Go on a cliché and gobbledegook hunt.

Funders are as guilty as any group of lapsing into jargon and stylish language. The trouble is, fashionable terms like “shifting the paradigm” or “taking down the silos” might not be clear and could in fact mislead the reader. And if the reader has difficulty understanding, she’ll be more likely to start staring out the window.

2. Use short sentences, active voice, and lots of white space.

Successful proposals follow many of the rules of popular journalism, and for the same reasons. They strive to be accessible and even compelling by letting combinations of words create an image in the reader’s mind, and in the best of circumstances, mobilizing the reader’s emotions towards a goal. In your case, the goal is the awarding of a grant, nothing more.

3. Paint word pictures that draw the reader in.

Some proposal writers lecture and wag their fingers at the reader. Others become captive of their field’s intricacies. While technical proposals being read by qualified readers can safely use formal language, most proposal writers should pay as much attention to the narrative of their proposal as any short story writer.

4. Write as much from your heart as from your head.

Misguided high school English teachers have ruined too much persuasive prose by requiring a dispassionate, objective-sounding voice. A proposal writer should be close enough to the work and the people who do it to infect the reader with the enthusiasm and dedication of those front line people. Analysis without feeling just isn’t moving.

5. Have a good friend edit your prose.

The harder you work on your proposal, the more difficult it may be to see the gaps in logic, redundancies, and failures to be clear. To fix this you need two things: a good editor, and a willingness to accept a critique of your work as help, not a personal attack.

6. Talk with successful grantees of that foundation.

People in nonprofits are part of a culture that values helping others, so asking colleagues to tell you about their experience with a funder doesn’t have to be seen by them as helping a competitor, especially when you reciprocate. Asking colleagues for assistance has the added advantage of building the kinds of alliances and networks that help everyone to succeed.

7. When in doubt, don’t.

So often, in the rush and stress of completing a funding request, the proposal writer will be faced with decisions about what to include. There is a natural but counterproductive tendency to pile on information, perhaps with the thought that bulk is impressive. The end result of these poor editing choices is a mammoth and dense proposal that works against the goal of creating enthusiasm for the work.



Excerpted, with permission, from “Thank You for Submitting Your Proposal,” by Martin Teitel, copyright 2006 Emerson & Church, Publishers. All rights reserved.

To order the book, call (508) 359-0019 or visit www.emersonandchurch.com

Five Mistakes Too Many Applicants Make

1. Talking mainly about problems, not solutions.

Grantseekers sometimes confuse writing proposals with authoring pamphlets meant to educate and mobilize the public. Your proposal should show that you're familiar with the details of the issue, but most of a good proposal will focus on exactly what you're going to do about the problem.

2. Describing specific problems with general solutions.

A proposal will succeed to the extent it provides a clear picture of what will be done about the issue being addressed. Too often proposal writers pour their hearts into the details of the problem, and then resort to vague generalities about their actual activities.

This lack of concrete action in a proposal might result simply from the proposal writer not having a clear picture of what's being done by others in her organization. Much worse, it might mean the group needs to slow down the fundraising until they have done a better job of strategic planning.

3. Prolific use of buzzwords and jargon.

Some proposal writers confuse density with erudition. What sells the work to funders is clear, simple prose that tells a story or paints a picture. Vague claims, fuzzy or trendy language, and obscure terms don't impress funders – quite the contrary.

4. Budgets that don't add up.

It seems so obvious, but enough proposals arrive on the desks of foundation executives with math mistakes to make it worth pointing out how much these careless errors undermine credibility. The budget should not only add up, it also has to support the logic of the proposal's narrative. Therefore a \$100,000 budget to reconstruct 16 flooded houses won't make sense, nor will \$700,000 to hire two new staff.



Excerpted, with permission, from "Thank You for Submitting Your Proposal," by Martin Teitel, copyright 2006 Emerson & Church, Publishers. All rights reserved.

To order the book, call (508) 359-0019 or visit www.emersonandchurch.com

Proposal Pointers and Pitfalls

Deborah Kluge

THE RFP

- Read it once, then read it again. And again. Experienced bidders know that several readings of an RFP are necessary for a complete understanding of what is required.
- Learn what the lettered sections of an RFP are (e.g., Section B refers to your pricing, Section C is the scope-of-work, Section K contains Representations and Certifications, Section L provides instructions to the bidders, Section M specifies the bid evaluation criteria, etc.). The titles of the lettered sections are generally the same in every RFP.
- Be aware that information critical to your bid may be scattered among many different sections of an RFP.
- Put the RFP in a 3-ring binder for easy use as a reference document. You might also want to insert dividers in front of each important section for quick reference.
- Use small “Post-It”™ notes at the edge of a page to mark important pages or paragraphs. That way, you can find them quickly.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RFP

- If you don't understand some of the information in the RFP, you can submit written questions to the Contracting Officer.
- Some RFPs specify a date by which questions are due. Make sure you send in your questions before the due date or they may not be considered.
- Be aware that the Government's response to all submitted questions are distributed to all bidders, usually through a written amendment to the RFP. Although you and your firm will not be identified as the “asker” of specific questions, the way in which you word your questions could provide important information to your competitors. Word your questions carefully to ensure that you don't give away information on your strategy or pricing.
- If you call the Contracting Officer to obtain or clarify information in an RFP, be aware that verbal information given to you by the Government is not binding.

THE PROPOSAL OUTLINE

- If you have downloaded an RFP from the Internet, you can use that file to begin constructing your proposal outline.
- If you do not have the RFP on disk, use a scanner to scan in important sections for use in preparing your outline.
- Some people prepare an annotated outline as well as a basic outline. An annotated outline can contain important points from the RFP, as well as your own information on what you are planning to say in each section.
- If you prepare an annotated outline, copy your file, save it under a different name, and delete the annotations. The result will be a basic outline which you can use for easier viewing and tracking of proposal sections and subsections.
- For each section and/or subsection of your outline, indicate the estimated number of pages that will be written, the person responsible for doing the writing, and the evaluation points.
- Put important instructions on the first page or at the top of your outline, so you don't have to rummage through the RFP to find them. These instructions might include: proposal due date and time, number of copies, page limits, font size, page margins, packaging and delivery instructions.