A Guide to Program Planning and Proposal Writing

Participant Workbook
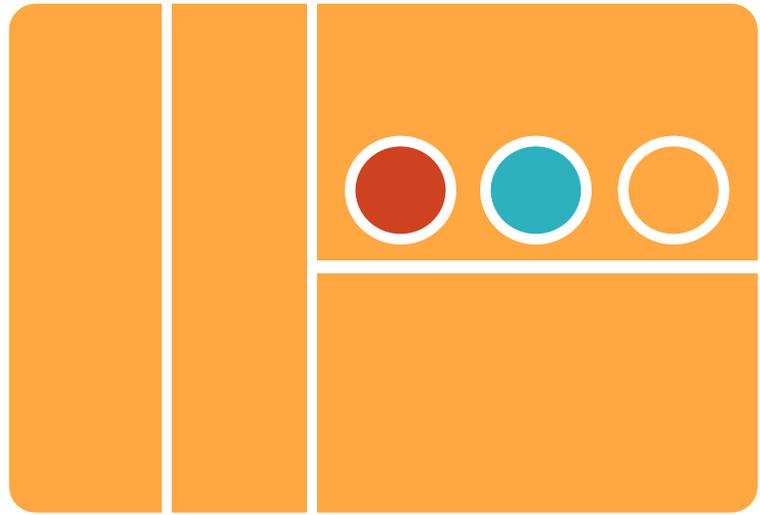
SASKATCHEWAN LITERACY NETWORK

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part one:

program planning

Why is program planning important?

A well designed program is about all the things that happen below the surface – where nobody sees them.

Evaluation   Implementation

Design and Planning

Planning bridges the current situation and our vision of the future.

Solid program planning is a process that involves:

- Building partnerships and involvement
- Determining strengths and previous accomplishments
- Knowing what's already happening, what's already offered
- Assessing a need
- Understanding what's not being provided.
- Identifying the gaps
- Prioritizing those gaps
- Identifying an idea
- Researching an idea
- Developing an implementation plan
- Developing an evaluation plan
- Finding resources and/or financial support
- Making decisions

Successful planning happens when there is ...

- A shared vision
- Long-term commitment
- Leadership
- Resources
- Support
- Realistic assessment of current situation
- Questioning
- A desire to build on past successes
- An inclusive, team approach
- Strong commitment to the issue
- Time to plan
- Time to evaluate

Most importantly, solid and succesful program planning involves asking questions.

Put another way:

- Who are we working with?
- Where are we at?
- Where do we want to go?
- How will we get there?
- What do we need to make it happen?
- How will we know we've arrived?

Who are we working with?

Developing partnerships

First things first: Planning a successful community literacy program means engaging others early in the process.

A partnership is defined as a relationship where two or more parties, having compatible goals, form an agreement to do something together." In a partnership, two or more parties share goals and work together to accomplish things that, outside of a group effort, might otherwise be impossible to achieve. Partners share the burden of risk and the benefits of success. Each member of the partnership also shares responsibilities, accountability, power and agenda.

Community-based partnerships are extremely important in building capacity and getting programs and activities off and running. Group efforts can develop creative solutions that can affect powerful change. But they don't just happen – they require a little forethought, some common goals and a commitment to nurturing over time.

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about." (Wheatley, 2002)

It may be challenging to find partners who share similar values, interests or agendas, or those who have the time and resources over and above their regular work to make a long-term commitment to the common partnership goals.

When developing a partnership, one of your first steps must be to define what a partnership is so there are no misunderstandings.

Partnerships are...

- Agreements between 2 or more parties who share goals to do something together.
- Based on sharing resources, risk, responsibility, accountability and success.
- A joint investment of resources.
- NOT simply gatherings – they have specific and purposeful common goals.
- NOT a list of names on paper - each member has an active voice and a specific purpose.

Possible community partners include the regional college, library, businesses, schools, chamber of commerce, and volunteer base.

Partnership Do's & Don'ts

Do's

- begin early – look for natural partners in the community

- discuss the partnership goals early and clearly

- get to know your partner (mandate, clients, etc.); building partnerships involves a climate of trust

- involve learners where possible

- set up partnership agreements to define parameters

- be positive - show what's in it for them, or the impact they could make

Don'ts

- write down the name of a partner on the proposal without contacting them first

- make assumptions as to what they can do or contribute

- allow hidden agendas within the partnership

- allow internal conflicts to derail the goals

Your task: Partnership Brainstorm

Refer to Activity Sheet #1

Where are we at?

Assessing the current situation

A needs assesment is a formal process that identifies existing services, the unmet needs, and the gaps between the two.

A needs assessment:

- Helps put proposals in perspective.

- Begins to build a provincial inventory of literacy services .

- Gives a complete picture of a community's literacy needs.

- Assessment can include: numeracy, prose literacy, document literacy, problem solving, technological skills, scientific skills, personal and social skills.

Example of a Needs Assessment Summary

Need	Currently Addressed?	Gap?	Project Focus?
Numeracy – workplace	No	Yes	Yes
Early childhood reading	Yes	No	No
ESL	No	Yes	Yes
Seniors reading	No	Yes	No

Your task: Draw a Community Map

Refer to Activity Sheet #2

Where do we want to go?

Your vision

> "Adult educators have spent the last fifty years trying to develop ever more sophisticated approaches to planning… We have suffered from a fixation on linear, tidy, and familiar models that treat a complex social process as unproblematic. It is time that we shifted focus from finding the perfect planning model to asking the right questions." (Sork, 2000)

When you are planning…

In addition to:

- Applying techniques
- Guidelines
- Suggestions
- Checklists
- How to's
- Steps

How about:

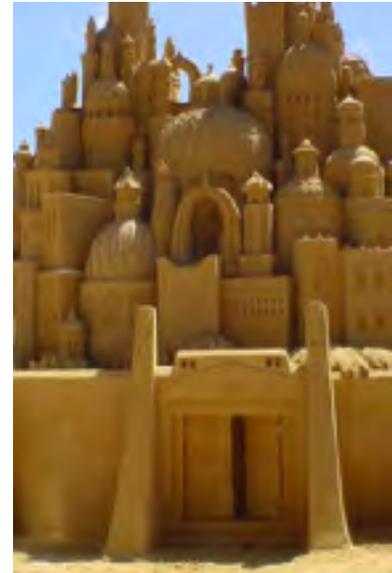- Posing questions.
- Thinking about the political and ethical factors involved with planning.

Planning can be messy and creative!

"But if we suppress the messiness at the beginning, it will find us later on, and then it will be disruptive." (Wheatley, 2002)

► ► ► ► ►

The messy stage doesn't last forever, although it can feel like that.

Your task: Project Vision

Refer to Activity Sheet #3

How will we get there?

Translating your vision into goals and objectives

Goals are broad statements that explain the overall purpose of the project. Think of the question "why are we doing this?" when writing goals.

Projects typically have one goal out of which several objectives flow.

Objectives "provide clear statements of the anticipated results to be achieved thorough the program." (Caffarella, 2002).

Objectives …

- focus primarily on what is expected as a result of the project.

- are often introduced with the words "to increase," "to decrease," "to reduce," "to eliminate".

- explain what changes are anticipated through the project.

- objectives do not describe your methods.

- objectives are measurable — they describe the objective in numerical terms if possible - and are linked to evaluation.

There are several types of program objectives:

▶ Objectives focused on learning and change

- Individual change
- Organizational change
- Community change

▶ Objectives focused on program operations

- Physical facilities
- Equipment
- Revenues
- Training program

Examples

- Goal

  To increase business and industry's awareness of literacy.

- Objectives

  To develop an informational brochure about workplace literacy.

Your task: Writing Goals and Objectives

Refer to Activity Sheet #4

How will we get there?
What do we need?

Mapping your timeframe and listing your resources

A solid program plan requires a list of activities within a realistic timeframe, using available resources, including:

- Staff

- Staff Training

- Supplies

- Facilities

- Equipment

- Travel/transportation

- Childcare

- Publicity

This will be used later to develop an action plan within your project proposal.

Your task: Identifying activities, timeframes and resources

Refer to Activity Sheet #5

Are we there yet?

Program results

Each of your objectives must have at least one expected result.

Expected results:

- Indicate how we will know the objectives have been met.

- Describe the outcomes and/or benefits that are anticipated from the project.

- Answer the question, "If we do this successfully, what will it look like at the end of the project?"

Your expected results could be simply your objectives reworded. I.e.: instead of "will increase…" may state "Increased…", etc.

Intended results or products include:

- Outputs: Deliverables such as materials, reports, workshops, promotional campaigns, specific literacy services provided (how many people). Includes distribution plan, if applicable.

- Outcomes (short, 1-3 years; long, 4-6 years): It's very important to describe the outcomes. They are the changes that are expected as a result of the project.

- Impact (7-10 years)

SMART outcomes and impacts

- Specific

- Measurable

- Action-oriented

- Realistic

- Timed

Your task: Identify intended results

Refer to Activity Sheet #6

How will we know we've arrived?

Evaluation

This is a collection of indicators of how successful the program has been, and presents a plan to determine how well the objectives are met.

Good evaluation techniques require that you ask good questions.

- How will you demonstrate that the objectives of the project have been met?

- What are the success indicators?

- When and how will you collect both the formal and the informal data?

There are two types of evaluation to consider:

► **Formative**

- Collected before and during program

- Focuses on collecting information to improve a program

- Helps to "form" the program

- Provides information necessary to modify the program when required

► **Summative**

- Collected at or near program end

- Focuses on collecting information to prove how successful the program was

- Helps to "summarize" the effectiveness of a program

What type of data will you collect?

Some examples of evaluation instruments and techniques include:

- Registration forms
- Follow-up forms
- Personal interviews
- Evaluation questionnaires
- Interview guides for interviewers
- Worker journals
- External documents and records

- Documented observations
- Conversations—quotes and paraphrased conversations
- Organizational or community records
- Self-assessment
- Tests
- Performance reviews
- Portfolios
- Focus groups

Where will you collect the data?

- Program site
- In the community (specifically: _____)
- Other?

From whom will you collect?

- Participants
- Community members
- Program facilitators
- Others?

Who will collect and report evaluation data, and how were they chosen?

> TIP: Evaluating programs takes time. Consider who will be responsible for evaluating and set aside a reasonable amount of time.

How will you use the results to improve programs?

How will you communicate the results? How will you know if your program is successful? (What are your outcomes?)

How will you list the best practices and the lessons learned? (This is a requirement for the Literacy Innovations Fund of the Provincial Literacy Office.)

- Written report
- Executive summary
- Series of short reports
- Oral sharing/reports
- Electronic sharing
- Case study report
- Presentation
- Brochure
- Other?

How will the results be used?

- To inform and gain support

- To influence decisions

- To document

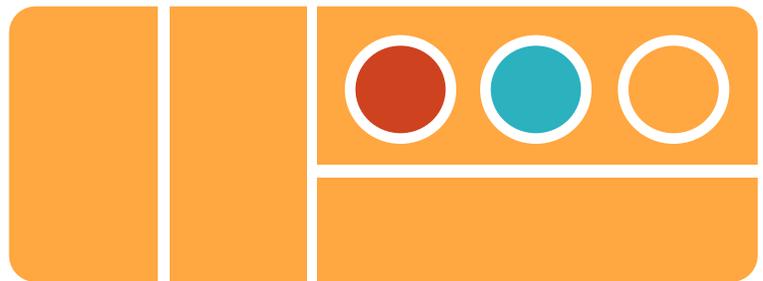- To demonstrate accountability

- To market

- Other

TIP: Be aware that external factors influence the success of the project and that not all objectives may be successfully met.

Your task: Plan your program evaluation

Refer to Activity Sheet #7

part two:

proposal writing

What is a funding proposal?

A funding proposal is an application for dollars to support a program or project. Writing proposals is one of several ways that funds can be raised.

When it comes time to write a funding proposal, if you have invested time in program and project planning, you will have most of the information you need.

Did you know...

- Many funding agencies will not give you monies unless you are a registered charity. Information on how to register as a charity can be obtained at the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency website:
www.ccra-adrc.gc.ca/menu-e.html

The Proposal Writing Process

Identify a project idea
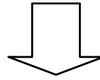
Develop the idea into a project or program plan

- Assess need and/or interest

- Research the idea

- Build support and involvement

- Develop a project plan
  (Goals, objectives, action plan, budget,
  Schedule, facilities and staff)

- Develop an evaluation plan

Research Potential Funders

Identify funders that are a good fit with the project
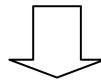
Contact potential funder
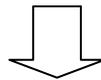
Write the proposal
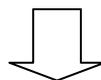
Preparing to Write a Proposal

Program planning and proposal writing go hand in hand.

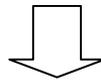- Plan your project or program before you begin to write your proposal.
- Plan time for writing your proposal and gathering supporting documents.
- Contact the potential funder early.
- Read the application guidelines carefully.
- Ensure your project fits the funders criteria:
    - What is their mandate?
    - What type of funding is available?
    - What projects have been funded in the past?
    - What are the eligible activities?

Typical Parts of a Proposal

- Cover letter
- Title page
- Introduction
- Rationale
- Goals & Objectives
- Action Plan
- Expected Results
- Evaluation Plan
- Supporting Documents
- Budget

Parts of a Proposal:
Cover Letter

A cover letter briefly introduces the funder to your project. It is printed on organizational letterhead and signed by a key person in your organization or the project contact person. The letter should be addressed to a contact person in the funding agency.

A cover letter contains:

- A short description of the project.

- The reason why the project is needed or important.

- The reasons why your organization is well suited to do the project.

Parts of a Proposal:
Title Page

The title page of your proposal should look professional and neat. If the funder has identified specific information for the title page, ensure you follow their directions.

A title page typically contains:

- The name and address of the project contact person

- The name and contact information of the organization requesting funds

- The project title

- The start and finish dates of the project

- Any title page specifications given by the funder

Be sure to avoid using fancy report covers or expensive binding. Include the name of the funding organization and their contact information.

Tip:

- Titles should be clear, unambiguous, and short.

Parts of a Proposal:
Introduction

The introduction prepares people to read the proposal. Sometimes funders require a proposal or project summary. A project summary usually contains much of the same information as an introduction.

Introductions briefly answer the following questions:

► **Who are we?**

- Clearly state who is applying for funds. Provide a brief historical overview of your agency, if appropriate.

► **What do we do?**

- Briefly describe your agency, what the agency does, and why you are the appropriate organization to be delivering the project.

► **Who do we do this for?**

- Describe your agency's clients and community.

► **What do we want to do?**

- Describe how the proposal was developed, including the primary goal of the project.

► **What have we done in the past?**

- Demonstrate your agency's qualifications or previous experience in the area.

► **Why are we the best to do this?**

- Describe how are you building literacy (or other) expertise into the project.

- Clearly explain the connection, between the funder and the project you are proposing, including which of the criteria your proposal meets.

Some Tips

- It's often easier to write your summary/introduction at the end of the process. You'll have a clearer picture.

- It is important to show how your proposal fits with the objectives of the Saskatchewan Literacy Benchmarks.

  - Information sheets on the Benchmarks are included in your binder.

- When writing your introduction, consider the following questions:

  - Is anybody else doing this kind of work?

  - Are there potential linkages/partnerships?

  - How does your project build on work that has already been done?

  - How is your proposal different from similar projects?

Parts of a Proposal:
Rationale

The rationale is sometimes also referred to as the problem statement or the statement of need. It describes why you are submitting the proposal.

The rationale:

- Clearly states the problem, issue or need you intend to address.

- Provides supporting documentation to understand the issue or problem.

- Describes who will benefit from this project and how they will benefit. Some funders ask that benefits be identified under a separate heading.

- Shows that the problem is solvable and your organization has an obvious role to play in the solution:

  - statements from your community or an authority

  - references to a literature review on your issue

  - references to other related activities

Possible sources of information to support your issue:

- Census data

- Statistics from a reliable source, such as the International Adult and Skills Survey (IALSS – see included factsheets)

- Agency/research reports

- Consultation and discussion documents

- Research reports

- Other public records and documents

- Service use records of your agency including waiting lists, registrations, and correspondence

- Information from telephone interviews, field surveys, or questionnaires

- Information gathered at a community forum on the issue

- Documented observations and conversations

- Requests from other organizations

- Canadian Council on Learning and National Adult Literacy Database research banks

Parts of a Proposal:
Goals and Objectives

If you have already clearly outlined your project goals and objectives, it will be easy to outline them in your funding proposal.

Refer back to your goals and objectives on worksheet #4. If needed, rework these items so that you have clearly defined your goals and objectives for the funding request you are completing.

Parts of a Proposal:
Action Plan

Your action plan is comprised of the proposed activities that will achieve your objectives.

Proposed activities:

• Stem naturally to address challenges and program objectives.

• Must be clearly described

• Are sequential

• Include outputs (deliverables such as the number of training sessions, number of promotional items, etc.)

• Are realistic – it's better to break the action into phases or smaller developmental segments

Tip:

• Sometimes activities and timelines are rolled into one section. There may be different timelines for different objectives.

Be sure to present a reasonable number of activities that can be accomplished within the time allocated for the program and within resources of the applicant.

Be realistic when outlining timelines. It may be better to give general time frames (fall, winter, spring) than specific dates.

Refer back to your list of activities on worksheet #5. If needed, rework the activity so that your action plan clearly outlines activities specific to your funding request.

Parts of a Proposal:
Expected Results

Expected results indicate how we will know the objectives have been met.

If you have already outlined your anticipated project results, this will be easily incorporated into your funding proposal.

Refer back to program results on worksheet #6. If needed rework the activity so that your expected results are specific to your funding request.

Parts of a Proposal:
Evaluation Plan

This is a collection of indicators of how successful the program has been. The evaluation plan describes evaluation reports to be produced, including the process for reporting results and receiving feedback from funders.

Refer back to the evaluation on worksheet #7. If needed, rework the activity to highlight the evaluation methods specific to your project and funder.

Remember, external factors influence the success of the project, therefore not all objectives may be successfully met.

Parts of a Proposal:
Supporting Documents

Make sure you attach everything the funder requires. They may request:

- A list of contact information for your agency's Board of Directors.

- Your most recent:

    - Annual report

    - Audited financial statement

    - Operating budget

- A copy of your letters patent or business number.

- Letters of support that speak to the need for the project and the applicant's ability to do the project.

- Pamphlets or printed information pertinent to organization or grant request.

- Dissemination plan - how will you share information from your project with other audiences?

- Timeline – try to make a graphic representation of your time line; this demonstrates the feasibility of your project in a visible way.

- Evaluation instruments – make a concrete draft; make sure to label it "DRAFT" at the top, but make it complete nonetheless.

- Resumes of key staff members.

- Award(s) earned by the organization.

- Sub-contractor information.

- Schedules.

- Definition of terms.

- Additional information such as drawings, figures, tables, graphs, charts, slides, statistics, etc.

Parts of a Proposal:
Budget

Many funders are beginning to look more and more closely at numbers to help them understand the work that is being done. By having a clear and understandable budget, you make it easy for your funders to understand how you intend to use the funds you're given to meet the goals you've set.

A budget:

- Is a financial plan based on the goals of the proposed project. When you create a budget, you are saying, "This is how much money I need, and this is how I plan to spend it."

- Is the bridge between the money you are asking for and the work you want to do.

- Is an exact reflection of the actions described in your action plan.

- Helps funders understand the specific costs you expect to incur.

- Contains no unexplained amounts for miscellaneous expenses.

- Is sufficient to perform the activities outlined.

A budget includes:

- All items asked of the funding source

- All items paid for by other sources

- Reasonable but not excessive administrative costs – typically between 10% and 15 %

- A clear statement of all in-kind donations: all products or services donated to your organization for the project. This includes:

  - volunteer time (expressed in dollars per hour)

  - admin support

  - free program space

  - copying

  - use of equipment, etc.

Budget types

Most funders require both a detailed budget and budget notes, and occasionally, a summary budget.

1) Detailed Budget

A detailed budget shows all income and expenses broken down into categories.

The more categories you have, the more detailed your financial information will be. This can be helpful, because it allows you to track your spending in certain areas, however, it is up to you to choose categories as you see fit.

Suggested Income Categories:

- Contributed Income - lists all contributions committed, pending, and to be requested. Here, you state how much you are expecting from:

  - In-kind donations
  - Individuals
  - Special events
  - Service clubs
  - Foundations
  - Corporation
  - Government
  - Your board of directors
  - Others?

- Contributions from your organization - include the cash amount your organization will be contributing:

  - Any monies set aside specific to your project.
  - Monies raised through any outside fundraising events (Raise-A-Reader, for example) that is specifically earmarked for your project.

- Income generated by the project.

  - Ad space in conference brochures

  - Display space at conference

  - Conference registration fees generated

  - Fees generated for trainings

  - Project-related ticket sales

  - Project-specific membership or subscription sales

  - Any product or service fees generated specific to your project

- Other income sources - here, you would include amounts and describe where you expect any other income to come from.

- Funds requested from funders - the amount you're requesting from the funder you are applying to.

- Funds expected from other funders.

A word about in-kind contributions...

In-kind goods and services that you will use to meet your project goals must have a dollar figure attached. This in-kind dollar figure should match (or nearly match) the amount you are requesting.

All volunteer contributions should be expressed in dollars per hour.

Generally, time donated by volunteers such as tutors and volunteer committee members is calculated at about $15.75 per hour, so the calculation would be; Volunteer time = the number of meetings X number of individuals X $15.75/hour.

As well, include the costs for all other services provided, including:

- staff hours for support and/or consultation
- portions of your rent
- portions of utilities
- equipment use
- copying
- typing
- filing
- accounting, etc.

Whenever possible, get a partnering agency to provide in-kind commitments in writing.

Quick tips on calculating in-kind contributions:

- To estimate the project share of overhead expenses, determine what percentage of the total organizational budget is represented by the project and then include that percentage of overhead expenses in the project budget as in-kind.

- Space – get a realtor's estimate for any office or meeting space you use for free.

- Calculate volunteer time: number of meetings X number of individuals X $15.75/hour

- Include staff support hours, consultation, copying, typing, filing, accounting, portions of your rent, portions of utilities, and equipment use.

Suggested Expense Categories:

- Rent
- Utilities
- Salaries and benefits
    - Remember: salary expenses must include mandatory benefits such as EI, vacation and CPP. Here in Saskatchewan, these extra expenses total nearly 14%; therefore, an employee earning $1000.00 per month would require a budgeted amount of 1140.00 ($1--- x 1.14).

- Travel and subsistence

    - Many funders ask that you split your travel costs into sub-categories to view greater detail. OLES, for example, requires that you take the time to plan these amounts separately. Do it as you are budgeting to avoid additional work filling out the application form.

    - Include items such as mileage, meals, hotels, parking and child care.

- Honoraria and professional fees or contracts

- Professional development related to project

- Publicity/advertising

- Printing of materials developed in project

- Distribution of materials developed in project

- Equipment rental

    - Funders rarely support the outright purchase of things like computers or file cabinets and desks. If you need these items, you absolutely MUST check with your funder first.

- Resources to purchase for project

- Audit

    - Whether you are a new or existing registered non-profit corporation, you will most likely need to check with the Corporations Branch of Saskatchewan Justice to see if you need to do an audit during your fiscal year. If required, be sure to budget for the expenses associated with it.

- Insurance

- Other: postage, courier, mail, office supplies, telephone, fax, internet, etc.

A word about overhead expenses...

Be sure to determine how much of your overhead expenses will be used just doing the work of your proposed project.

For example, if you are doing two projects out of your office and half of your efforts are going into each project, then half of your overhead expenses should be attributed to each project.

Be reasonable and realistic about what it will cost you to run your office.

Detailed Budget - SAMPLE (see worksheet #8)

On the worksheet page's sample, note that each main project objective has a column of its own.

Also note that that there is a column for Cash and a column for In-Kind – this provides you with a place to put in figures for in-kind goods and services you think the project will generate.

All of the categories shown are for example. Work with the ones that suit you best.

Budget Notes

Budget notes accompany the detailed budget. They are written notes that show what expenses you wish each expense category to cover. Budget notes link your project proposal and your budget, explaining how you intend to carry out the project with the funds you will be given.

Some expense categories are self-explanatory and do not require budget notes, especially if you're request isn't excessive.

2) Budget Summary (see worksheet #9 & #10)

Some funders, particularly the federal Office of Literacy and Essential Skills and the provincial Literacy Office - Ministry of Education, want to see your detailed budget, but also require a budget summary form. This summary form includes fewer expense categories than your detailed budget shows.

The budget summary allows funders to compare multiple applications quickly and easily.

Sustainability Planning

Sustainability Planning

- is a plan for continuation beyond the grant

- presents a specific plan to obtain future funding if project is to be continued

- describes how other funds will be obtained to implement the project

- describes growing revenues from other fundraising activities

- describes concretely how the program will have minimal reliance on future grant support by generating its own revenue over time

- describes the effect on your project if other funds are not obtained

Tip:

- do not rely on future funding from same source

- prepare a "Plan B" accompanied by letters of commitment to future funding from other sources

Evaluating your Proposal

Have your proposal read/edited by someone familiar with your agency. If you can, also get someone outside your sector to read the proposal as well.

Checklist for Evaluating Proposals

☐ Is your writing clear, to the point, and easy to read?

☐ Is your proposal well organized?

☐ Does the first sentence of each paragraph introduce the idea?

☐ Are the activities well thought out rather than fuzzy, ambiguous, or generalizing?

☐ Are the sentences and paragraphs short?

☐ Does the proposal avoid clichés?

☐ Have you chosen adjectives carefully and used them sparingly?

☐ Have you used plain language instead of using professional or technical jargon and acronyms?

☐ Is the writing style and format consistent throughout?

☐ Is the writing free of grammatical mistakes?

☐ Have you adequately defined the terms you used?

☐ Will your readers understand the details of each section?

☐ Are there any ways to improve the impact of the proposal?

Proposal Writing Tips

Do:

- Make contact with the potential funder early.

- Read the guidelines carefully and follow them closely! Make sure your project fits with the intent of the grant.

- Make sure you include all the documents requested.

- Be realistic about what can be accomplished in the scope (time and resources) of this grant.

- Provide concrete evidence to support your statements.

- Speak concisely, speak positively, and be specific.

- Use clear language; no abbreviations, initials, or jargon.

- Use point form for lists.

- Number all pages.

- Check for grammatical mistakes and typos.

- Stick to the specified number of pages. If no numbers are stated, be as brief as possible – 5 – 8 pages is fine.

- Include a table of contents for longer proposals.

- Put all footnotes on the same page as the text to which they refer.

- Ensure your budget adds up and is clear.

- If you hire someone to write your proposals, work closely with them to make sure they are familiar with the project and organization.

- Remember to plan for the time and training necessary for staff to feel confident about implementing the project.

- Call the funder if you have questions, but don't wait until the last minute.

Proposal Writing Tips

Don't:

- Talk using generalities or in emotional terms.
- Call attention to your past mistakes.
- Use acronyms (such as SLN, SLC, etc.)
- Use technical language or jargon.
- Use personal pronouns (I, we, us)
- Use contractions (can't, won't)
- Include more appendices than requested.

Sources

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www.nwt.literacy.ca

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