

Tips for Preparing Federal Grant Proposals

General Tips

1. Read the Request for Proposals (RFP) thoroughly. Pay attention to the requirements (page limits, section headings, budgets, etc.) and to the assessment criteria.
2. Choose a grant that matches your project. It is more difficult to try to make your project “fit” a grant’s requirements, although, if there is room for some flexibility, this may be possible.
3. Build partnerships with other organizations now, but choose your partners strategically. Most funding bodies prefer to see partnerships including two or more institutions involved in best practice and resource sharing. Each partner organization should have at least one representative on the project team, but you don’t want the project team to become so large that it seems unmanageable. Think about which organizations have the best resources and expertise in the areas related to the project.
4. Think seriously about the time commitment each team member can give to the project. Most grants require the Principal Investigator/Project Leader (PI/PL) to donate at least 20% (one day per week) to the project for its duration.

Before Writing Your Proposal

1. Notify the Government Sponsored Programs and Research (GSPAR) Office of your intent to submit a proposal. You will be invited to meet with our Grants Specialists to discuss your proposal and find out how we can best support you during the process of proposal development.
2. Talk through your project idea with potential partners and gauge their interest in being involved. If they are, you will need to know who will represent the organization on the project team, what they will be doing on the project, and if they will require budget items. You will need to ensure the executive administrator is aware of and committed to the project. S/he will need to provide a letter of support for the project. This letter must be signed and on letterhead. Organize this well in advance of the deadline. The GSPAR Office can provide you with sample partnership letters.

Writing the Proposal

1. Allow yourself enough time to plan, write, edit, and revise your proposal. It is best to begin with an outline clearly identifying the headings that must be used (if specified in the RFP) and any questions that must be addressed in each section.
2. Stay within the page limits as any pages over the limit will usually not be read by the reviewers. Also adhere to the font, line spacing, and margin requirements. Remember that some sections are included as attachments (ie the budget and key personnel bios). Sometimes a first draft is longer than the page limits, and that is okay. The GSPAR staff can help you edit the final proposal.
3. Your title should be descriptive of your project and use key words related to your intended outcomes.

Comment [J1]: 1)Read, read and read again the RFP carefully before they plan the application. Although we help interpret the RFP, it is different from that they read it carefully themselves because they need to understand the purposes and guidelines themselves.
2)Talk, talk and talk again with the program officer about their ideas and plans. This prevents the proposal from deviating the objectives of the solicitation.
3)Search, search and search, and review the previous studies. This gives sound and strong justification for the proposed project.
4)Prepare at least three months before the deadline and have the collaborators on discussion board.

4. Clearly identify your outcomes early and explicitly state the need that is being addressed by the project. You must have a strong, evidence-based rationale for why the project needs to be done and who will benefit from its outcomes.
5. The background or literature review should include a brief overview of the most relevant, recent literature published that is related to your project. Its contents should be informed by the aims of the grant program. Remember that the reviewers won't necessarily be experts in your field, so try to avoid discipline-specific jargon and explain difficult concepts as clearly as possible.
6. When thinking about your methodology, start with your outcomes. What is the *best* project design to get from where you are now to where you want to be? Explain the methodology/project plan step-by-step, and explain why it is the best way to achieve the intended outcomes. During each step, specify who will be responsible for that part of the project and why this is the best person.
7. Every project should include, within the project plan/methodology, formative and summative evaluation. Some grant programs require an external evaluator who is not involved in the project. This person usually receives an honorarium or stipend for their time. Be sure to include methods of evaluation at key intervals throughout the project. How will you measure whether you are achieving your intended outcomes? How will this information/data inform project progression?
8. Once you have completed your project, it is a good idea to share your findings and outcomes. Include a plan for dissemination. Common dissemination activities include a website, Facebook page, Twitter account, newsletters to key stakeholders, conference papers, and publications.
9. The purpose of including the CVs and bio statements of key personnel is to demonstrate the team's capacity to achieve the intended outcomes. Keep the contents related to the project, and if you have collaborated with other team members effectively in the past, highlight that. You are answering the question: Why is this the best team to complete this project?
10. In the conclusion, clearly articulate who will benefit from the project outcomes and how they will benefit. You want to ensure the reviewers understand the value of your project.
11. Be as specific as possible and choose your words carefully. You don't want to sound vague.

Preparing the Budget and Budget Justification

1. Use the template provided by the funding body.
2. Explain how each item in the budget links to the project outcomes. If any travel is included, articulate the purpose and objective in relation to the project outcomes.
3. Ensure the budget isn't below the funding floor or above the funding ceiling as stated in the RFP.
4. Break the budget down into years and begin with the month specified for project start date in the RFP.

5. Be as specific as possible and explain the cost effectiveness of the proposed budget.

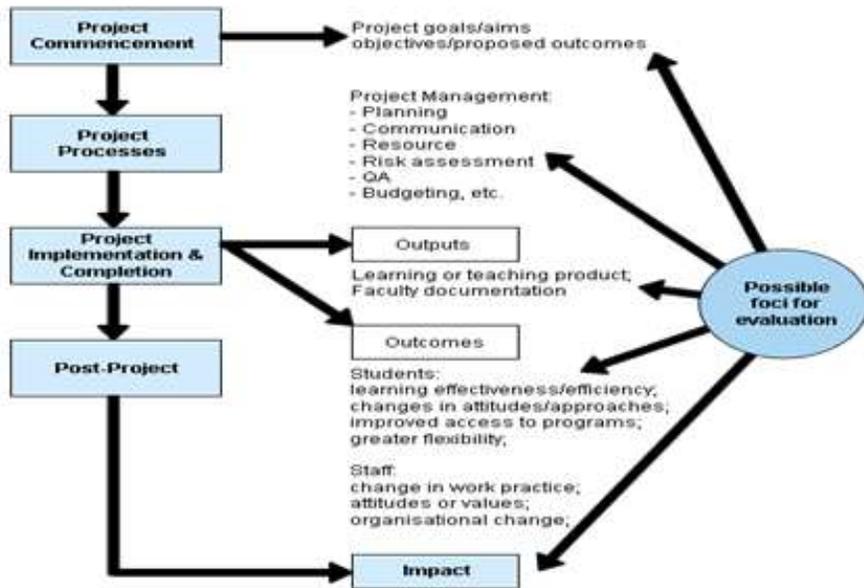
After Writing a Proposal

1. Try to adhere as closely as possible to the deadlines established by the GSPAR office. It is advisable to submit your proposal 2-3 days before the actual deadline, and it is preferable that someone who has not been heavily involved in writing the proposal has a chance to review it before final submission to ensure quality and coherence.

2. Send the final draft and all attachments to the GSPAR office. We will submit the proposal for you, and you will receive a confirmation email. Most funding bodies will notify you of the outcome of your proposal within 4-6 months.

MODELS FOR EVALUATION:





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