

A grant proposal is a persuasive formal report that asks an organization or individual to fund a project. There are many kinds of grants, including research grants, financial awards for education, government grants for beneficial projects and small business, etc. While this handout outlines general guidelines for grant writing, always tailor your proposal to the guidelines you have been given.

Before Writing Your Grant Proposal

- ☐ **Consider what type of proposal you are writing.** Grant proposals can be *internal* (written to a member of your organization or institution) or *external* (written to a separate entity). Grant proposals can also be *solicited* (requested) or *unsolicited* (unrequested). Knowing what type of proposal you are writing will help you select appropriate content.
 - For example, if you are writing an unsolicited, external proposal, you may need to introduce yourself and your organization in detail and include extensive background information about the problem you are addressing.
- ☐ **Understand the prompt.** If you are writing a solicited grant proposal, most organizations will provide detailed guidelines for the content and organization of the grant. Follow the guidelines closely, and ask a colleague or mentor to help you interpret them if you need assistance.
- ☐ **Consider your audience and their needs.** Depending on your audience's skillset and familiarity with your topic, you may need to provide contextual information to be more persuasive. To better understand your audience's values and expectations, read about the organization or individual and closely study the prompt.
- ☐ **Read and analyze sample grant proposals.** Review proposals within your industry or academic field. It may be helpful to mirror an accepted proposal's structure and tone.
- ☐ **Gather sources.** Your audience will be more willing to accept your proposal if you show that you have thoroughly researched both the problem you plan to address and your proposed solution.
- ☐ **Locate or create the images or graphics you want to use.** Although you do not need to include visuals, they may enhance and better explain your content, especially if your audience is unfamiliar with the subject of your proposal or your discipline.
- ☐ **Consider how you want to format your proposal.**
 - In a **solicited** proposal, the prompt will often outline length and content requirements. In an **unsolicited** proposal, mirror the length of similar grant proposals.
 - If your proposal is **formal** (e.g., external), include a **cover letter or executive summary** outlining your main points at the beginning of your report (no more than two pages).
 - If your proposal is **less formal** (e.g., internal), you may want to include a one-page overview instead of an executive summary.
- ☐ **Outline your grant proposal.** Outlining will help you solidify the content and organization of your proposal and will save you time during the revision process. Ask a mentor or other reader to review your outline for logical organization, appropriate content, and professional tone.

Writing Your Grant Proposal

Most grants contain the sections listed below and follow a similar organization, although section titles may differ by field or discipline. However, you do not need to include all the sections. Remember to always defer to the guidelines provided.

1. Introduction or Executive Summary

- ☐ **Present the purpose of your proposal.** Most of the time, your purpose will be applying to complete a project for an organization or to receive funding for a private project that benefits your academic community or the public. If you are requesting funding, state the desired amount.
- ☐ **Introduce your organization or research team.** Briefly describe your academic and professional background, and highlight your qualifications.
- ☐ **Outline the main points from each section of your proposal.** The executive summary functions as an abstract, so your audience can see a brief, but thorough, preview of your entire report.

2. Problem or Purpose Statement

- ☐ **Identify the problem your project hopes to address and explain its importance to your professional or academic community.** To convince your audience that your project is worthwhile and unique, cite outside sources or provide a brief literature review of existing research. If you are writing a solicited proposal, you can also summarize the organization's need for the project or research, which should be stated in their advertisement or guidelines.

3. Project Description or Narrative

- ☐ **Describe your project's final form and how it offers a solution to the problem.** Your description should (1) outline the ideal, final form of your project; (2) state what you hope to learn, discover, or produce once your project is complete; and (3) demonstrate how your findings or final product will solve the problem or contribute to a solution. This information demonstrates that you have thoughtfully designed your project.
- ☐ **Outline the predicted results and benefits of your project.** You should provide specific, concrete examples to convince your audience that your project will be successful. Your examples may be hypothetical or cite the results of similar projects that can help predict the impact of your project.
- ☐ **Acknowledge and address potential barriers or counterarguments.** You will need to research and cite differing viewpoints to gain an in-depth understanding of the professional, scholarly conversation surrounding your topic. If any counterarguments have merit, acknowledge their validity and offer reassurance that you have taken steps to address or accommodate concerns.

4. Methods or Procedures

- ☐ **Outline your plan to complete your project.** Describe any methods or procedures you will use in detail. You may use diagrams or other images to better explain your approach.
- ☐ **Explain the rationale behind your procedure.** To establish its place within scholarship, cite other academics' or professionals' methods and explain why you plan to mirror or diverge from them.
- ☐ **Define and explain any theories or technology essential to your project.** If using a theoretical framework or new technology, explain its function and how you plan to use or apply it.

5. Schedule and Budget

- ☐ **Create a detailed timeline.** Include major project deadlines and indicates who will complete each task. This shows your audience that you will use their funds intentionally and responsibly.
- ☐ **Explain how you plan to use funds.** Provide an itemized budget. This budget may include employee wages, travel expenses, and supply lists.

6. Qualifications

- ☐ **Explain why you and your colleagues are qualified to perform this research or complete this project.** You can consider formatting this section like a resume or in paragraph form, as long as you list relevant experience and education.

7. Conclusion

- ☐ **Restate the purpose and benefits of your project and your qualifications.**
- ☐ **Explain how you plan to share your research or your project's finished product.** Disseminating your work may include publishing an article, selling a product, presenting at a conference, sharing evidence for a needed expansion or adaptation, etc.
- ☐ **Provide your contact information.** The organization or individuals reviewing the grant will need to contact you if they have any questions or if they would like to move forward.

8. References

- ☐ **Cite the sources you used.** Throughout your proposal, use the citation format most accepted in your academic discipline or profession.

Revising Your Grant Proposal

- ☐ **Get feedback** from those in your field, including administrators, professors, and professionals.
- ☐ **Plan on writing multiple drafts** of your proposal, sometimes revising several times to find the right tone and phrasing. Set aside ample time for this stage.
- ☐ **Ensure that your tone is polite and professional.**
- ☐ **Mimic the language of the prompt** (for solicited proposals) **or the key words present on your audience's platforms** (for unsolicited proposals). Show your audience you can offer exactly what they are looking for. Organizations may filter grant proposals through artificial intelligence (AI) that looks for key words or phrases from the prompt. If your proposal does not include these words or phrases, it may be rejected before review.
- ☐ **Proofread** your proposal for grammar mistakes or unclear wording.
- ☐ **Ensure that your proposal is visually appealing and easy to read.**
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with the submission platform in advance. **Confirm file formats, label files clearly and professionally, and check links and permissions** before submitting your proposal.