

Grant Proposal Checklist

Write the proposal in your own language, from your heart. Remember that **people** are reading this proposal and making a decision about whether to fund you. The more you can communicate person-to-person, the better. Make it easy to understand. Avoid complex or “academic” language and jargon that is unique to your organization.

- 1. OVERVIEW OF YOUR ORGANIZATION:** Grant applications usually begin by asking for description of your organization. *This section should introduce the funder to who you are and why you are qualified carry out your proposed project.* Be sure to include:
 - **When** your organization got started
 - Your **mission** or what purpose your organization serves
 - **Who** you serve – e.g. youth, elderly, people with barriers to employment – and include the number of people you serve
 - The **geographic** area you serve – county, town, etc.
 - **Your major programs**
- 2. DEFINE THE PROBLEM OR ISSUE:** There are a lot of issues facing rural communities. Do not spend this entire section describing every problem your community faces (e.g. poor health, high unemployment, food desert, etc.). Instead, focus on the 1-2 issues (no more than 2!) that your project address:
 - Briefly say what the problem is, but be specific.
 - Use data to back up you up:
 - Socio-economic and demographic data: Census: <https://data.census.gov/>
 - Health data: County Health Rankings: <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/>
 - Food insecurity: Feeding America: <http://bit.ly/NCFoodInsecurity>
 - Think about surveying your participants to get relevant data
 - Why existing services don't or can't meet the need. Show that you know what services already exist and how you might work with these services.
 - Evidence that the community feels the need, wants the program and has been involved in planning it. This might be shown through a survey, existing participation, planning meetings, etc.
- 3. STATE YOUR GOAL(S):** The goal is not your project itself; instead it is your **reason** (or **why**) you are doing your project. For example, if your project it to develop a tutoring program, your goal might be to improve school drop-out rates; your goal would not be the tutoring program itself. Your goals must be:
 - **Do-able:** For example, do not have a goal to improve health if your project will only increase food access (and that will be all you can measure)
 - **Directly related to your issue:** If you listed *food insecurity* as the issue you are addressing, then your goal might be increasing *food security*.
 - Something you **can and will be able to measure.**

4. PROJECT DESCRIPTION: You’ve already defined the problem and stated your goal, so this is the opportunity to explain to the funder what your organization is going to **do**. The project description should paint a clear picture of what the project or program will look like on the day-to-day, and answer all the basic who, what, where, when, and how questions:

- Explain the specific things you are going to do to reach your goal. Include how many people you expect to reach or serve with your program and what changes you expect to bring about (**be specific**).
- Describe where you’re going to do it.
- Explain how you’re going to reach the people who need the program.
- Explain how long it’s going to take and the timeline of activities
- Describe who will be responsible for making sure the activities take place and the objectives are met. Will new staff be needed? How will present staff be involved? Have these staff and/or volunteers agreed to do what you say they are going to do?
- Describe any qualifications or background of project/program staff
- Specify what supplies and materials you’ll need and what publications or products, if any, you plan to produce.

5. EVALUATION: Develop an evaluation plan **before** you begin your project. It does not have to be hard or cumbersome!! Be sure to track:

- Short-term:
 - WHO: age range, # of participants, demographics, socio-economic status, etc.
 - WHAT: document programming/project (curriculum used, program materials, etc.)
 - WHERE: geographic target
 - HOW OFTEN: weekly, summer-long, monthly and total hours
- Long Term / Impacts: These are changes in:
 - Skills/ Knowledge
 - Attitude/ Opinion
 - Behavior
 - Condition/ Circumstance



| Type of Change | Typical Tools for Measuring |
|-------------------------|---|
| Skills/ Knowledge | Tests (pre & post), Demonstrations, Observation |
| Attitude/ Opinion | Surveys, Interviews, Journals, Focus Groups |
| Behavior | Interviews, Observation, Self-Assessments, Surveys |
| Condition/ Circumstance | Observation, Case Study, Self-Assessments, Measurements |

6. BUDGET: Be specific. Funders do not like to see a large “miscellaneous” category. Include, in separate columns, funds that will be spent from the grant and funding from other funding sources and “in kind”. Sometimes matching funds are required. Show the funder that you have multiple sources of support.

Always include a **budget narrative** with your budget. The budget narrative accounts for each line item and how the money will be spent. In it you will describe how funds will be used for your program costs. The more specific and detailed you are about how the funding will used, the stronger your application will be.

| Sample Budget Line Items | Total Project Cost |
|--------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Personnel | |
| 2. Contractual Services | |
| 3. Travel | |
| 4. Supplies | |
| 5. Equipment | |
| 6. Meeting Expenses | |
| 7. Printing/ Copying | |
| 8. | |
| Total | \$ |

7. OPTIONAL OR SOMETIMES REQUIRED DOCUMENTS:

- Letter from the IRS proving your 501c3 status
- Organizational Budget (often asked by larger funders)
- List of board members, officers and staff.
- Letters of support for the proposal.
- Photos

8. ADDITIONAL THOUGHTS:

- **End of year report:** The funder will usually request an **end of the year report** once the project is completed. When reporting on your grant, go back to your goal(s) and objectives and compare what you've done with what you planned. Explain how you learned from this experience and your future plans.
- If, during the year, you find you have to change your program/budget in any significant way, get in touch with the funder and let them know what has changed. Remember, your goal is to be a good steward of their money and they expect it to be spent for the reasons you laid out in your grant proposal. Again, this builds good will and trust between you and the funder.