

Tips for writing a winning proposal

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Together we'll go far



Writing a winning proposal

Tip #1: Get to the point

- *What is your mission?*
 - Few things are more important than your mission. Make sure:
 - It describes what your organization was created to do.
 - It is clear, concise and to the point.

- *What is your budget?*
 - Be sure to develop a budget that shows all costs associated with your program. Make sure there is a clear cost justification. **If a large portion of budget is earmarked for administrative cost, be prepared to justify.**



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Tip #1: Get to the point *(cont.)*

- *How much do you need?*
 - Don't be afraid to ask for what you need.
 - Don't expect one or two organizations to meet your funding needs. Funders like to see multiple sources of funding so that your organization remains healthy should you lose a few of those sources.
- *How will the money be used?*
 - Make sure that you know funders priority.
 - Don't apply for funding that does not clearly align with your mission
 - Is there a quantifiable impact?



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Tip #2: Do your homework.

- Know what kind of support the funder provides and direct your request accordingly.
 - Be a super sleuth!
Research past funding decisions and how they were presented publicly.
 - Don't be afraid to ask the funder who you are competing against.



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Tip #3: Describe your organization.

- Give a brief history of your organization.
 - Don't tell them where you're going until you've told them where you've been...

Successes:

- *What have you accomplished?*
- *What was the impact to clients?*
- *What was the impact to the community?*

Opportunities (**expressed verbally**):

- If questioned, don't hide misjudgments. State what happened and your response to it.
- Demonstrate you can analyze, measure, and take appropriate action.



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Tip #3: Describe your organization. *(cont.)*

- *What programs or services do you offer?*
- *What are your program or service objectives?*
- *What is the number of people and geographic area served?*
- *How do you measure success?*
- *Who are your allies or partners in community?*
- *Who do you compete against and what differentiates you from your*



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Tip #4: Show competence.

An organization is only as competent as its staff.

- List your staff and their titles.
 - If necessary be prepared to provide biographies.
 - Staff work experience and skill level should be consistent with the job function.
 - Showcase specific contributions made by individuals to bring the staff list to life.



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Tip #5: Explain *why* they should fund you.

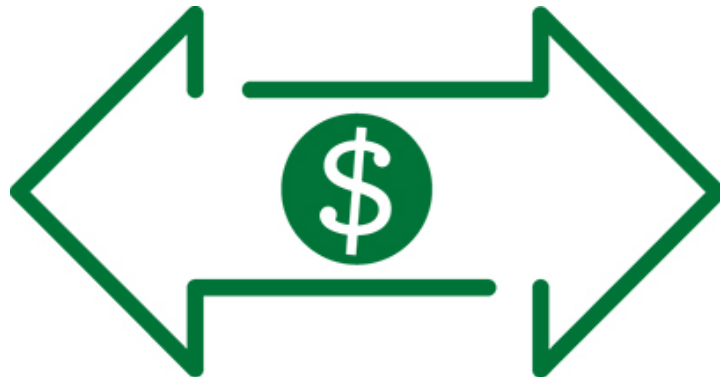
- Explain your uniqueness.
- Delineate the need and relevance of your programs or services to the audience you serve.
- If there are other organizations with a similar mission serving the same population and geography, then distinguish yourself.



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Tip #6: Demonstrate fiscal fitness!

- Non-profit organizations should be managed with the same care and consideration as for-profit organizations.
- Provide current year income and expense plan.
- Provide previous fiscal year income and expense actuals (audited if possible). If operating in a deficit, be prepared to explain why.



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Tip #7: Show who's guiding your organization.

- List officers and board members.
 - The success of any organization is anchored in good solid governance.
 - Officers and board members must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to guide the organization.
- Provide evidence of a long-range plan.
 - *Where are you going?*
 - *How will you get there?*



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Tip #8: Provide program information.

- Describe your program or project.
- Give a timeline for implementation and evaluation.
- What is the budget?
- Where is your support coming from?
Provide a line item list of proposed and committed sources of funding.
- List what type of volunteer contributions are needed for the program or project to be successful, and how you plan to secure this support.



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Tip #9: Bring your mission to life.

Include marketing and communication tools:

- Your annual report.
- Brochures that describe your programs and services.

Use images to tell your story: pictures of those who benefit from your work can explain much more than words.



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Tip #10: Build relationships!

- Building relationships with funders is more than lunch! Stay on their radar. Make sure funders are aware of your successes and activities.
- Make sure you include them on your mailing lists and newsletters.
- Send copies of news and other articles that visually demonstrate your mission at work.
- If possible, know who the key contacts are for the funder. Don't submit a grant application without making contact by phone or in person before your submission.



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Tip #11: Go the extra mile.

- Go where funders go.
 - Conferences, convening, roundtables...always take the opportunity to speak to a funder even if it is a brief introduction
 - Seek out opportunities to speak on solutions your organization can provide to specific community needs.
 - Drive the solution not your need!



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Q&A