HOW TO WRITE A GRANT PROPOSAL

A grant proposal outlines a project idea, explains why your agency needs grant money and provides evidence demonstrating the project's need and worth to the grantor. To write a successful grant proposal, it's important to clearly and effectively communicate the necessity of your project in your community, the positive impact it will have on your community and/or environment, and a project execution plan of how the funds will be used while following the grant's required timeline.

BEFORE YOU GET STARTED
Start developing your project plan beforehand, create an account on SAM.gov to apply for Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number[1], check specific eligibility requirements under the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) while considering each of the following:

- Research and find the right grant on the USDOT or Grants.gov
- Develop an actionable, specific, and meaningful plan
- Consider how your plan will achieve results
- Review the grantor's proposal guidelines
- Use Grants.gov as a resource for guidelines and videos

BEST PRACTICES
When writing a grant proposal, it's important to focus on effective communication and organizational consistency. This section offers guidelines to enhance the readability and persuasiveness of your proposal, ensuring it stands out to the reviewers. Keep in mind that, although they may require similar content, each grant may follow a different structure, proposal and response requirements, evaluation criteria and may have additional requirements, such as administrative documents, letters of commitment, and/or federal forms.

PRECISION AND CLARITY
Eliminate ambiguity, present information in a structured format, and ensure all claims are substantiated.

STRUCTURE AND FLOW
Follow the specified format, page limitations, and make sure the response follows the same order in which topics are addressed within Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)[2] under the response instructions. For example, don't begin your proposal with the Community Impact section if the instructions outline Overview/Project Description first.

RIGOROUS REVIEW
Make sure that each section is addressing every point required in order to submit a fully compliant proposal. Ensure consistency across all sections and formatting restrictions.

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS
Take every detail into account by checking eligibility, proposal requirements, evaluation criteria, areas of funding, grant amount, limitations, and other restricting language. Additional information or response requirements are sometimes included within the evaluation criteria details, rather than the proposal response requirements.

[1]This may take 30 days to process.
[2]Grant solicitations are named Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

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PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

When structuring a grant proposal, you will describe your mission, explain how you plan to use the grant funds, provide project objectives, present a timeline for the project's completion, and outline the expected outcomes. Most grants include these components:

PREPARE

Read through the full NOFO. Stay up-to-date with addendums year-to-year. If the latest addendum is not followed, then a proposal submission may be deemed as non-compliant.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Clearly provide a project overview and detailed explanation of what the project will entail, this includes resources from personnel to materials and project timeline to whether the project will be executed in phases.

ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUND

Provide a brief organization history, mission, and vision to add credibility.

IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY

Examine the drawbacks of the current infrastructure on the community and explain how proposed improvements will bring about positive changes. Emphasize that the grants aim is not only to modernize infrastructure, showcase the positive community impact of modernization, such as enhanced public safety, reduced carbon emissions, fewer car accidents, and quicker travel times for emergency vehicles.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Outline quantifiable targets, demonstrating how the project's outcomes will be evaluated.

METHODOLOGY

Detail the operational workflow, including a visual representation of the process and the resources involved.

EVALUATION STRATEGY

Explain the evaluation process, illustrating the project's effectiveness and the methodology for measuring success post-implementation.

SUSTAINABILITY PLAN

Discuss strategies for maintaining project outcomes beyond the grant period, showing foresight into the future funding.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Present a clear, itemized budget that aligns with the project goals, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and adherence to requirements. Unfortunately, you can't simply ask for the maximum amount allotted per applicant without providing documented proof of the projects anticipated costs.

RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Explain how the project will remain on track despite potential challenges.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Develop a plan to keep stakeholders informed, including frequency and methods of updates.

SUBMISSION TIPS

- **BE UNIFORM** Use a consistent font and margin size, include page numbers and consider adding a table of contents. Charts and graphs should be professionally presented.
- **BE THOROUGH** Double-check that all forms, signatures, and appendices are included. Ensure that any required letters of support or endorsement are enclosed.
- **BE PROFESSIONAL** Craft a cover letter that concisely summarizes the proposal's key points. Tailor the letter to the grantor, showing alignment with their priorities.
- **BE PROACTIVE** Submit the proposal before the due date.

AWAITING THE OUTCOME

Understand the extensive review process and prepare for a wait, knowing that thorough consideration is given to each application.

Learn more about available grants!

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