



Project Proposal Writing Basics

 Project Basics

 Proposal Writing

 Impact & Delivery

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Introduction



Project Proposal

A project proposal is a detailed description of a series of activities designed to solve a specific problem.



Business Proposal

A business proposal is a commercial pitch sent to an external client to sell products or services and secure a contract.



Proposal's Role

The project proposal should be a detailed and directed manifestation of the project design. It presents the project to the outside world in an immediately recognized and accepted format.



Purpose of a Project Proposal



Key Objectives

- Secure funding or resources
- Obtain approval for a project
- Establish a partnership
- Provide a management reference after approval



The Funding Reality

A proposal can secure funding or resources, obtain approval, or establish a partnership.

*However, a well-written proposal **does not guarantee funding.***

Donors may receive many strong applications and have limited funds. Good proposal writing improves the quality and credibility of the request, while donor fit and competition also affect the final decision.



Understanding the Audience



Know Your Audience

- Understand the priorities and goals of donors, investors, and government agencies.
- For NGOs: Donors look for alignment with their mission (e.g., education, healthcare, poverty alleviation).
- For Individuals: Investors focus on ROI and proposal feasibility.



Tailoring the Proposal

- Customize each proposal to match the recipient's strategic priorities.
- Speak to their specific needs and show how your project directly addresses them.
- Research past projects they have funded to align your request effectively.



The Proposal Writing Process



Step 01 Plan

What do you
need the
money for?



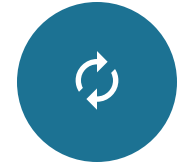
Step 02 Research

Who will you
approach, and
why them?



Step 03 Write

How will you
put it all
together?



Step 04 Follow Up

What happens
after the
decision?



How to Write a Project Proposal



Groundwork & Structure

- Once the groundwork has been completed, proposal writing can commence.
- The key decision to be made at this stage is establishing the structure, including the content and length of the final project proposal.



Formats & Requirements

- The structure depends on the nature of the project and the funding agency's requirements.
- Across formats like application forms, design outlines, or grant guidelines, common structural elements are easily detected.



Writing Techniques



Clarity & Precision

- Write clearly and avoid using technical jargon or overly complex language.
- Use simple, direct language to make your proposal understandable to all readers.



Persuasiveness

- Use strong, evidence-backed arguments to make your case.
- Incorporate success stories, data, and testimonials to make the proposal more compelling.



Writing Techniques



Urgency & Timing

- Show urgency and explain why the project needs to happen now.



Conciseness & Focus

- Conciseness: Be concise and to the point.
- Avoid unnecessary details that do not directly contribute to the case.
- Respect the reader's time by ensuring all sections are succinct but informative.



Let's begin



Key Components of a Project Proposal



01 Project Title or Cover Letter

Basic identification and formal introduction

02 Executive Summary or Abstract

High-level overview of key proposal elements

03 Problem Statement

Clear definition of the issue and target need

04 Goals & Objectives

Measurable targets and intended impact

05 Activities & Methodology

Action plan and implementation strategy

06 Expected Outcomes

Anticipated results and deliverables

07 Monitoring & Evaluation

Tracking progress and performance indicators

08 Budget

Financial requirements and resource allocation

09 Sustainability

Long-term viability and exit strategy



STARTING THE PROPOSAL



01

Title page

A title page should appear on proposals longer than three to four pages.

Key Elements to Include:

- Project title & lead organisation
- Potential partners (if any)
- Place & date of preparation
- Donor agency name

02

Project title

The project title should be short, concise, and preferably refer to a certain key project result or the leading project activity.

Title Best Practices:

- Keep it actionable & specific
- Provide an effective snapshot
- Avoid titles that are too long or overly general

03

Executive Summary

The executive summary is one of the most important parts of the proposal. The reviewer will often read it first to determine if they want to continue reading the rest of the proposal.

It should include:

- Statement of need, the proposed solution, and the expected outcomes.
- Goals and objectives
- Background on your organization
- Typically written after the rest of the proposal is completed



Contents Page & Organisation Guidelines



SECTION GUIDELINES

Contents Page

When to Include:

Required if the total project proposal is longer than 10 pages. It can be placed at the start or end of the document.

Key Functions:

- Enables readers to quickly find relevant sections
- Lists section titles clearly
- Provides beginning page numbers for each section
- Improves document navigation & readability

Tips for Successfully Presenting an Organisation

Tips for Successfully Presenting an Organisation

- Never use language that could be perceived as an attack towards any other organisation or institution.
- Carry out an analysis of your organisation's strengths prior to preparing the proposal and then showcase these strengths.
- Show that your planning process is participatory and takes into consideration the opinions of the target group.
- Prepare a short document that presents your past experience (organisational record) and attach it to the project proposal.



Problem Statement

A strong proposal names the problem precisely, then translates it into a goal donors believe in and objectives they can measure.



01 NEED DEFINITION

Clearly define the problem or need your project intends to address.

02 EVIDENCE & DATA

Use evidence, data, or research to support why this issue is critical.

03 URGENCY & TIMING

Highlight why the problem is urgent and why your solution is needed now.

04 HUMAN ELEMENT

If possible, use touching stories to make the problem human.

05 GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE

Limit the explanation of the problem to your geographic focus area.

06 IMPACT & CONSEQUENCES

Explain why it matters, whom it affects, and the consequences of not addressing it.

Key Principle: One goal per project. As many measurable objectives as it takes to get there.

Goal

The broad, long-term change to which the project contributes (e.g., improving women's economic opportunities).

Objective

A specific result the project intends to achieve within its period, training a defined group with measurable impact.

An objective should be SMART:



Specific — Can this objective overcome real-world problems and unlock specific opportunities?



Measurable — Is the result trackable/countable? What are the key metrics?



Achievable — Will working towards this objective create positive change?



Relevant — Does this objective align with overall strategic priorities?



Time-bound — What is the timeline for working towards and achieving this objective?

SMART Example

"By December 2027, provide employability & entrepreneurship training to 100 unemployed women aged 18–30 in Community A, with at least 70 completing the programme, improving assessment scores by 30%."

Target: 100 unemployed women (aged 18–30)

Measurable: 70+ completions, +30% score increase

Timeframe: By December 2027

KEY COMPONENTS (WHAT TO INCLUDE)

- **Key areas:** Define the specific changes the project needs to address (what).
- **Target group:** Clearly state who will be involved or affected by the change (who).
- **Direction of change:** Indicate the planned trajectory of the intervention.
- **Degree of change:** Quantify the amount or scale of change required (by how much).
- **Deadline:** Establish a clear timeframe to reach the target degree of change (when).
- **Goal alignment:** Ensure every objective is directly related to the overall project goal.

WRITING GUIDELINES (HOW TO STRUCTURE)

1. Start with Action

Begin with the word **"to"** followed by an action verb (e.g., Decrease, Increase, Strengthen, Improve, Enhance).

2. Single Focus

Specify **only one major result** per objective to keep tracking straightforward and clear.

3. Apply the SMART Framework

Ensure each target is strictly **Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound**.

Hierarchy of Goals, Objectives, Results, and Activities

Visualizing the logical framework and relationship of project levels





Project Goal & Objectives Framework

Visualizing the alignment of community goals, project objectives, and success indicators



ULTIMATE GOAL

Improving the quality of life in the community

OBJECTIVE 1

Improving the water supply in quality X and quantity in the village of Z

MEASURABLE INDICATOR 1.1

The number of households attached to the water supply system was increased by X%

MEASURABLE INDICATOR 1.2

The number of taps in the village was increased by Y%

OBJECTIVE 2

Reducing by X the rate of acute infections

MEASURABLE INDICATOR 2.1

The number of taps in the village was increased by Y%

STRATEGIC IMPACT DETAIL

Directly contributing to sanitation and hygiene improvements to achieve target infection rate reductions.



Project Activities & Methodologies

Strategies, steps, and key actions required to achieve project objectives



CORE METHODOLOGY & STEPS

Describe strategies, key activities, target populations, and specific actions to meet objectives.

- **Who, What, When, & How:** Define exact operational parameters
- **Task Breakdown:** List all specific tasks and activity streams
- **Roles & Responsibility:** Assign accountable leads for each task
- **Implementation Timeline:** Establish detailed schedules and milestones
- **Verification & Completion:** Set clear success and verification criteria

TYPICAL PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Example action types across key focus areas:

Capacity & Learning

Training programs, workshops, technical conferences, & strategic meetings

Community Outreach

Street shows, rallies, awareness campaigns, articles, & publications

Direct Support & Empowerment

Shelter home establishment, counseling services, legal support, & forming cooperatives

EXPECTED OUTCOMES & QUANTIFIABLE IMPACT

Demonstrate clear, measurable results and long-term project impact tied directly to planned methodologies and activity indicators.



Project Budget Guidelines

Translating planned project activities into transparent, realistic financial projections



A project proposal budget lays out in detail how much the project will cost and where that money will go. It translates your planned activities into actual numbers, so a donor can see exactly what they'd be funding.

CORE BUDGET ELEMENTS

Essential components required in a comprehensive project budget:

- **Detailed Cost Breakdown:**
Present a detailed budget outlining all costs involved in executing the project.
- **Direct & Indirect Costs:**
Include direct costs (e.g., salaries, materials) and indirect costs (e.g., overhead).
- **Strategic Alignment:**
Ensure that the budget aligns directly with the project's activities and objectives.

WHAT FUNDERS LOOK FOR

Key criteria used by donors to evaluate financial proposals:

- **Activity Match:** A clear match between proposed activities and expenditures.
- **Realistic Estimates:** Reasonable and realistic estimates of expected costs.
- **Justification:** Adequate justification for all planned expenditures.
- **Staffing:** Appropriate staffing structure for the project scale.
- **Accuracy:** High precision and mathematical accuracy throughout.



Monitoring & Evaluation Plan

Tracking progress, assessing impact, and ensuring project effectiveness



CORE M&E ELEMENTS

Essential parameters for tracking and measuring project performance:

- **Success Measurement:**
Explain clearly how you will measure overall project success.
- **Indicators & Metrics:**
Define quantitative and qualitative metrics to track ongoing progress against objectives.
- **Key Operational Dimensions:**
 - **Who:** Identify evaluation leads and stakeholders
 - **What & When:** Define scope, data points, and timing
 - **How:** Detail methodologies and tools
 - **Resources:** Outline necessary budget and staffing

WHAT FUNDERS LOOK FOR

Key criteria donors use to evaluate evaluation frameworks:

- **Logical Alignment:**
The evaluation plan flows directly and logically from the objectives specified in the work plan.
- **Solid Evidence Base:**
Promises to deliver tangible, objective evidence demonstrating actual project effectiveness.
- **Detail & Specificity:**
Provides detailed data collection methods, benchmarks, and responsible roles.
- **Realistic & Feasible:**
Ensures all monitoring activities are realistic and achievable within budget constraints.



Sustainability Framework

How the project's benefits, services, skills or systems may continue after the grant ends



POSSIBLE APPROACHES

Proven strategies for embedding long-term sustainability:

- **Training local people:** Building lasting community capacity
- **Transferring responsibility:** Gradual hand-over of operations
- **Integrating activities:** Embedding into existing programmes
- **Developing partnerships:** Aligning with key stakeholders
- **Maintaining equipment:** Establishing maintenance protocols
- **Diversifying income:** Securing alternative funding channels
- **Strengthening ownership:** Fostering community leadership

WHAT THE PROPOSAL SHOULD EXPLAIN

Core elements funders expect in your exit & continuation plan:

- **What Needs to Continue:**
Specify key services, systems, or benefits requiring ongoing operation.
- **Who Will Take Responsibility:**
Identify the local institutions, partners, or leaders taking ownership.
- **What Resources Will Be Required:**
Outline future financial, technical, and human resource needs.
- **Steps for Likelihood of Continuation:**
Detail action steps implemented during the project lifecycle to ensure success.

KEY TAKEAWAY: Sustainability is a plan for what continues, not a promise to keep fundraising.



Common Mistakes to Avoid

Key pitfalls in proposal writing that lead to rejection and how to prevent them



01

Vagueness

Not clearly defining the problem, objectives, or methodology.

02

Lack of Research

Proposals without solid research, data, or evidence to back up claims are often rejected.

03

Unrealistic Budgets

Overestimating or underestimating costs or timelines can undermine the proposal's credibility.

04

Ignoring Donor Guidelines

Not following specific donor requirements can lead to automatic rejection.

05

Lack of a Plan

Target group/population not clearly defined. Funders fund solutions to problems, not activities.



Thank You

Thank you for your attention



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

We welcome any questions, feedback,
or further discussion regarding this
presentation.

PRESENTER INFORMATION

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Role

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