

## Writing a Grant Proposal:

It takes a while to create a project. A group may have a good idea for a project but to create a proposal document out of it that can attract attention of other people, especially funders, takes time and effort. Be patient and seek help from various people. During the development of the proposal you will rewrite the different parts several times. It is very difficult to criticise your own writing so others can be helpful. Ask people who have written proposals in the past to help you and critique your draft proposal.

Having a good proposal drafted is an accomplishment for the group. Think of your proposal as a working document, a clear, logical description of your event. This is where you describe what you want to organize. Remember, for most people, this will be the only knowledge they will get about your project. The proposal *is* (the manual of) your event/project.

To start the process, list the various section headings to get a framework on paper. Write one short sentence on each to explain to yourself what it stands for. Then elaborate on that sentence to get "leading sentences" that indicate the content of each paragraph. The proposal should follow a logical flow. Try to be specific and brief. Do not use flowery language, cliché remarks, and/or unfounded (unproven) statements. Use simple sentences, some facts (backed by citation and references) and some ambitious goals.

You always have the possibility to ask more experienced people for examples of project proposals of activities of the past. IFMSA Officers, Liaison Officers and the Project Committee will be glad to put you in touch with other people who have already worked on the field.

## Different Sections of the Proposal:

1. Cover page
2. Summary Fact Sheet
3. Vision
4. Executive Summary
5. Problem Statement/Background
6. Goals
7. Objectives
8. Workshop in a Broader Perspective
9. Preliminary Program
10. Methodology
11. Follow-up Activities
12. Participants
13. Qualifications
14. Partner Organizations
15. Board of Recommendations
16. Evaluation
17. Dissemination
18. Conclusion
19. Attachments

**Cover page: includes**

1. Title
2. Logo
3. Date
4. Organisers
5. Partners

**Summary Fact Sheet: includes**

1. Project Title (specific and well defined area, remember to stay focused)
2. Sector (Ex.: Public Health, Education, Environment, Sport event,...)
3. Applicant (the name of your organisation, federation,...)
4. Period: Dates of event
5. Location (city, country)
6. Web-address (address)
7. Budget amount
8. Participants (target-group; age, countries etc.)
9. Brief Goals (that same goals that are stated later in the project proposal)
10. Expected Outputs (Skill training, Lobbying, follow-up projects etc.)
11. Organiser(s) (all contact information on co-ordinator and fundraiser)
12. Bank Account (number, institution)

**Vision: includes**

A summary statement that is a bit general and vague but sums up why you are doing this project. It should be realistic but not more than 2 sentences. 3 at most.

**Executive Summary: includes**

A 1 page summary of everything in your proposal. This is what most people will read and they will not read the rest. The funders typically only glance at the executive summary and the budget when your proposal goes through Stage 1 of evaluations.

This is the most important part of your proposal so read every sentence here many times to make sure it conveys exactly what you mean to say. The summary must convince the decision makers that your project is relevant to their particular concerns and to the needs of the country, but that you are also the correct entity/organization to conduct this project.

**Problem** — a brief statement of the problem or need your agency has recognized and is prepared to address (one or two paragraphs);

**Solution** — a short description of the project, including what will take place and how many people will benefit from the program, how and where it will operate, for how long, and who will staff it (one or two paragraphs);

**Funding requirements**— an explanation of the amount of grant money required for the project and what your plans are for funding it in the future (one paragraph); and

**Organization and its expertise**— a brief statement of the name, history,

purpose, and activities of your agency, emphasizing its capacity to carry out this proposal (one paragraph).

The executive summary should summarize all elements in the project proposal. It is important that if a new reader reads the executive summary he/she clearly understands:

1. the problem and the unmet need
2. your solution/strategy and your project goals
3. your qualification as good candidate to bring the solution
4. the time, duration and magnitude (size) of your project
5. the cost of doing this project.

**Problem Statement/Background: includes**

This is where you should cover all arguments for you arranging such an event, and the need for it. What has led to the identification of this problem and to the decision to develop a project to address it? What is the general situation and how is the problem developing? Will it grow rapidly if unchecked? What has been done so far to address the problem and with what effect? Has there been any evaluations of previous activities and what have been the findings? What evidence is there to show the need and demand for a workable solution? What has been your organisation's involvement? Why are you, as medical students, the most appropriate persons to arrange such an event?

This is the section where you convince a reader that there is a problem in the society, which will be aggravated if something is not done about it urgently. Then you state whom you are (as an organization) and that you have a project that seeks to address some of the problems.

**Goals: includes**

Concise statements of what is ultimately to be accomplished in the project. Remember to mention the target groups. And remember not to have too many goals, 3-5 is generally enough.

Ex.1: Control and reduce of the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Eastern Africa.

Ex.2: Educate future health professional on how to include Health and Human Rights issues into curricula.

**Objectives: includes**

more specific aims which the project is to achieve with its own resources and activities and within the time frame specified in your proposal. While the goals can be a bit more abstract, the objectives are stepwise and measurable. On the percentage of objectives you accomplish, your success is rated.

The Objectives measures (direct or indirect) to verify to what extent the goal is fulfilled. The Objectives should be connected to the goals, so that by achieving the objectives you have fulfilled the goal. There are at least 4 types of objectives:

1. **Behavioral** — A human action is anticipated.  
**Example:** Fifty of the 70 children participating will learn to swim.
2. **Performance** — A specific time frame within which a behavior will occur, at an expected proficiency level, is expected.  
**Example:** Fifty of the 70 children will learn to swim within six months and will

pass a basic swimming proficiency test administered by a Red Cross-certified lifeguard.

3. **Process** — The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.  
**Example:** We will document the teaching methods utilized, identifying those with the greatest success.
4. **Product** — A tangible item results.  
**Example:** A manual will be created to be used in teaching swimming to this age and proficiency group in the future.

In any given proposal, you will find yourself setting forth one or more of these types of objectives, depending on the nature of your project. Be certain to present the objectives very clearly. Make sure that they do not become lost in verbiage and that they stand out on the page. Be realistic in setting objectives. Don't promise what you can't deliver. Remember, the funder will want to be told in the final report that the project actually accomplished these objectives. Mention that the final evaluation of the project will include a detailed analysis on objectives that were accomplished and those that remained unaccomplished.

**Workshop in a Broader Perspective: describes**

if your project is part of a broader context: Series of conferences/workshops, Congress, Long Term Project, International Training Congress etc. This allows you to borrow credibility from other successful events as well as lend a sense of the bigger picture to your reader. This makes your local program national and international without taking away from your local focus. A funder is better able to see how your focused project fits in with a bigger goal of your organization or your type of organizations.

**Preliminary Program: includes**

an outline of the day-by-day, hour-by-hour account of the activities that will happen in the duration of your project. The program is usually analysed by experts in the field who carefully evaluate if your program components will be able to achieve the objectives that you have stated earlier. You must seek some professional help from experts in designing this. IFMSA has many experienced people who will help you. Make the program interactive, multi-faceted and interesting for participants. It should contain some components where participants simply learn from others, and then some components where they teach others or teach themselves. Use your resource persons here and seek their advice. It is also important to have coffee-breaks and spare time for private discussions. Don't stuff your program too much. A good idea is to imagine yourself going through such a program, in a mental simulation and see if it makes sense. Would you like to sit through a 2-hour lecture? Or would you like too many lectures in a day? Or would you like to get to know the other participants better? And would you like to learn some skills? And would you like to have a plan of action before you finish the project?

**Methodology: includes**

the methods you are going to use. Examples: Lectures, case-studies, group discussions, panel discussions, statements, interactive games, field-trips, role-plays, video sessions, simulations, writing action plans, etc.

**Follow up Activities: includes**

plans for the participants to engage in activities that will continue to create solutions to the problem statement of this project. This cannot be decided before a project begins but you should include your own ideas on what kind of activities do you envision the participants engaging in once they finish your project.

**Participants: includes**

selection criteria that you used to select the participants for your project. E.g. Did they have to write a motivation letter, did you choose based on geographical region, gender and other diversity, previous experience in the field, questionnaire etc.

**Qualifications: includes**

one paragraph on the activities already done in the field by your organisation. This information could be provided by your standing committee director or other officers. You should definitely try to impress upon your readers that IFMSA is an international organization with members in many countries and which works on many different themes. List some of the workshops, projects that IFMSA has organized in the past, which will catch the funders' attention.

**Partner Organizations: list**

All organizations that will provide support to you (confirmed) and put a short (small paragraph) description of their activities

**Recommendations:**

**Patron:** an important, admired and well-known persons who will be your "witness". (Ex: for a workshop on Environment you can ask Sting, for a workshop on HIV/AIDS; the director of UNAIDS.) It can also be the President, Prime - Minister, Health Minister of your country.

**Board of Trustees:** group of people that bring credibility to your project. These people are usually well-known personalities who are recognized in general circles in the field.

**Scientific Board of Recommendation:** *Experts in the field* who have helped you developing the project, they can also be your speakers.

It is up to you to decide if you want these three distinctions or if you want just one Board of Advisors. However, you should clearly know why you have invited a certain person to be a member of your board. S/He should have experience from the field and it is important that your Board-members have the motivation and interest in helping you. Generally you want two types of people:

1. Those who are big-names and attract immediate attention
2. Those who have good contacts and time to connect you with them. They can provide guidance on program as well as in fundraising. It is generally a good idea to contact at least 1-2 people in a partner organization (such as a large non-profit or a UN agency) who are themselves moving up their career ladder and will take part-ownership of your project to make it successful. If their careers will benefit from the success of your project, they will give extra attention to it. An example would be assistant project directors in UN agencies or program officers of non-profit organizations of grant-making foundations.

**Evaluation: includes**

Details on how you plan to evaluate your successes and failures. Most project proposals are found weak here and this where a good proposal looks different from a weak proposal. It is important to have qualitative and quantitative analysis of project outcomes and to have clear details on how they will get reported. Will each objective get evaluated separately? Will an external/impartial body also do an evaluation? Will the participants do a self-evaluation? What will be the performance indicators and how will the project strive to highlight not just the successes but also the failures or short-comings in the project. Evaluation is also a sound management tool. Like strategic planning, it helps a project refine and improve its program. An evaluation can often be the best means for others to learn from your experience in conducting the project.

**Dissemination: includes**

Information on how you are going to disseminate the final outcomes of your project. Typically it refers to the way in which you will let other people know (a larger audience) about the final report, the project evaluation, the plans of actions etc. so that a wider community can learn from your project and also participate in the follow-up programs. This section usually lists the kind of avenues you plan to utilize for dissemination and its usefulness as a good medium. E.g. Follow-up Meetings, Reports, Publications, Internet, E-mail lists, CD-ROMS etc.

The dissemination is of great interest of your funders. Funders want to know the outreach that you and your project participants will have after the duration of the project. The more people who learn from your project, the more interesting and valuable your project is to a funder. Remember that if you are budgeting the publication of a final report, you should as well indicate how you would like to distribute it and include the expenses in your budget

**Conclusion: includes**

Every proposal should have a concluding paragraph or two. This is a good place to call attention to the future, after the grant is completed. Since funders want to know the sustainability of your organization and of your project, you should state how the project might carry on without further grant support. This shows that your organization has done a good financial check of itself and is ready to face all kinds of unforeseen problems. What you really **DON'T** want to say is that your project will die if you do not get support from this funder.

This section is also the place to make a final appeal for your project. Briefly reiterate what your organization wants to do with this project and why it is important. Underscore why your organization needs funding to accomplish it and how your objectives are aligned with the goals and objectives of the grant-making organization you are applying to. Don't be afraid at this stage to use a bit of emotion to solidify your case.

**List of abbreviations: includes**

a list of all abbreviations that you have used in your text. This typically becomes a glossary of all the organizations that have acronyms that are commonly known.

**Attachments: include**

Items that add credibility to your project but are not a necessary component of your workshop. These can include, for example:

1. Expense and Income Budget Sheets
2. List of Board of Trustees, Scientific Board of Recommendation etc.
3. Latest Annual Report of IFMSA
4. Printed reports of past IFMSA projects/workshops
5. CD-ROMs with IFMSA reports, media coverage etc.
6. Letters of recommendation from your patron, Board of Trustees etc.

## **Time-Line**

*Writing a draft of Executive Summary:* 1-2 weeks.

*Writing the proposal:* 1 month (iterative process)

*Writing cover letter and creating budget:* 2 weeks

*Creating the Board of Trustees, Scientific Board of Recommendation:* 1 month, but continuous process.

*Research on grant-making foundations and potential funders:* 2 weeks (continuous process)

*Sending out the fundraising applications:* start at least 9-10 months in advance, but continue to do it until the last moment. Funding agencies have cycles that are usually once or twice a year.

*Publicising the event with Homepage, press releases, media:* As soon as possible.

*Inviting the speakers:* At least 6 months in advance, but the sooner, the better. Remember not to invite too many speakers, but try to make use of the lecturers for multiple days and to have interactive sessions, like case studies etc.

*Selection of the participants:* start about 6 months prior to workshop but continue up to one month in advance.

*Program development:* from the beginning.

*Pre-reading material:* should be sent out a month in advance along with other logistical information.

*Evaluation:* The evaluation-sheets should be ready before the event takes place.

*Final Report:* within three months after the conclusion of the Workshop. The rough final-draft should be first distributed to the partner organizations to see if they have any changes to recommend.

*Distribution:* You can publish booklets or on a CD-ROM. Depending on your audience, a CD-ROM may be a cheap and convenient form to distribute the final report and project materials in bulk numbers. Remember to include expenses for the final report in your budget. Remember printing and shipping costs. Also, would hosting a web-site cost you money?

## **Writing a Letter of Intent** *(adapted from Foundation Center)*

Sometimes the scale of the project might suggest a small-scale letter format proposal, or the type of request might not require all of the proposal components or the components in the sequence recommended here. The guidelines and policies of individual funders will be your ultimate guide. Many funders today state that they prefer a brief letter proposal; others require that you complete an application form. In any case, you will want to refer to the basic proposal components as provided here to be sure that you have not omitted an element that will support your case.

As noted, the scale of the project will often determine whether it requires a letter or the longer proposal format. A good and easy way to check is to go through Foundation Center Web-site (<http://www.fdncenter.org>) or to call the foundation directly to ask. For example, a request to purchase a \$1,000 fax machine for your agency simply does not lend itself to a lengthy narrative. A small contribution to your agency's annual operating budget, particularly if it is a renewal of past support, might also warrant a letter rather than a full-scale proposal.

What are the elements of a letter request? For the most part, they should follow the format of a full proposal, except with regard to length. **The letter should be no more than three pages.** You will need to call upon your writing skills because it can be very hard to get all of the necessary details into a concise, well-articulated letter.

As to the flow of information, follow these steps while keeping in mind that you are writing a letter to someone. It should not be as formal in style as a longer proposal would be. It may be necessary to change the sequence of the text to achieve the correct tone and the right flow of information.

Here are the components of a good letter proposal:

- 1. Ask for the gift:** The letter should begin with a reference to your prior contact with the funder, if any. State why you are writing and how much funding is required from the particular foundation.
- 2. Describe the need:** In a very abbreviated manner, tell the funder why there is a need for this project, etc.
- 3. Explain what you will do:** Just as you would in a fuller proposal, provide enough detail to pique the funder's interest. Describe precisely what will take place as a result of the grant.
- 4. Provide agency data:** Help the funder know a bit more about your organization by including your mission statement, brief description of programs offered, number of people served, and staff, volunteer, and Board of Trustees info, if appropriate. Include stuff here that shows the credibility of your organization.
- 5. Include appropriate budget data:** Even a letter request may have a budget that is a half page long. Decide if this information should be incorporated into the letter or in a separate attachment. Whichever course you choose, be sure to indicate the total cost of the project. Discuss future funding only if the absence of this information will raise questions.
- 6. Close:** As with the longer proposal, a letter proposal needs a strong concluding statement.
- 7. Attach any additional information required:** The funder may need much of the same information to back up a small request as a large one: a board list, a copy of your tax determination letter, financial documentation, Annual Reports, and brief resumes of key staff.

It may take as much thought and data gathering to write a good letter request as it does to prepare a full proposal (and sometimes even more). Don't assume that because it is only a letter, it isn't a time-consuming and challenging task. Every document you put in front of a funder says something about your organization. Each step you take with a funder should build a relationship for the future.

## Sources for additional info on proposal-writing:

1. Foundation Center Proposal Writing Online Short Course (<http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html>)
2. Geever, Jane C. THE FOUNDATION CENTER'S GUIDE TO PROPOSAL WRITING. New York, NY: The Foundation Center, 2001. An in-depth instructional manual from pre-proposal planning to post-grant follow-up, which contains excerpts from grant proposals and interviews with foundation and corporate grantmakers about what they look for in a proposal.
3. Achilles, Charles M. Brewer and Ernest W. Fuhriman. FINDING FUNDING: Grantwriting and Project Management from Start to Finish. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc., 1995. Offers tips and ideas on how to target proposals, the grantwriting process, and the steps involved in implementing, operating and terminating a project.
4. Barbato, Joseph and Danielle S. WRITING FOR A GOOD CAUSE: The Complete Guide to Crafting Proposals and Other Persuasive Pieces for Nonprofits. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 2000. Practical advice about the art and craft of writing related to fundraising proposals, as well as case statements, newsletters, and other communications devices used by a typical development office.
5. Bauer, David G. THE "HOW TO" GRANTS MANUAL: Successful Grantseeking Techniques for Obtaining Public and Private Grants. 4th ed. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1999. Includes information on various aspects of proposal writing, including documenting the need and program planning. Also includes chapters on researching federal funds.
6. Browning, Beverly A. GRANT WRITING FOR DUMMIES. Forest City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide Inc. 2001. Covers the basic elements of proposals to both government and private funders. Includes advice about preparing budgets, meeting deadlines, use of writing style, addressing evaluation, and follow-up. Appendix presents two complete proposals: one to a federal agency, one to a private foundation.
7. Carlson, Mim. WINNING GRANTS STEP BY STEP. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1995. Includes information on how to research funders, write a letter of intent and evaluate a proposal.
8. Clarke, Cheryl A. STORYTELLING FOR GRANTSEEKERS: The Guide to Creative Nonprofit Fundraising. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 2001. Clarke puts forward the notion that proposals share much with great stories: characters, setting, and plot. She shows proposal writers how to craft documents that include elements of drama. The book also covers the research process and cultivation. Includes a sample letter of inquiry and a sample budget, as well as information on packaging the proposal.
9. Friedland, Andrew J. and Carol L. Folt. "WRITING SUCCESSFUL SCIENCE PROPOSALS." New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000. Proposal writing wisdom specifically for those in scientific fields.
10. Frost, Gordon Jay, ed. WINNING GRANT PROPOSALS: Eleven Successful Appeals by American Nonprofits to Corporations, Foundations, Individuals, and Government Agencies. Rockville, MD: Fund Raising Institute, 1993. A group of funded proposals with amounts ranging from \$5,000 to \$1 million dollars.
11. Golden, Susan L. SECRETS OF SUCCESSFUL GRANTSMANSHIP: A Guerilla Guide to Raising Money. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1997. Provides information on navigating the grantmaking process; offers strategies for preparing and submitting grant proposals.
12. Griffith, Jerry. PROPOSAL PLANNING AND WRITING. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1998. Covers the proposal development process for federal government, private foundation, and corporate funding sources. Answers twenty-five basic questions frequently asked by both inexperienced and experienced grantseekers. Also presents many examples taken from successful proposals.
13. Hale, Phale D., Jr. WRITING GRANT PROPOSALS THAT WIN. 2nd ed. Alexandria, VA: Capitol Publications, 1997. Covers the major elements in any proposal, discusses the difference between applying to federal and private sector funders, and includes a list of federal and private funder Web sites, resource list, sample federal application forms, and a list of contacts in state governments.
14. League, VC. THE PROPOSAL WRITER'S WORKSHOP: A Guide to Help You Write Winning Proposals. Sacramento, CA: Curry-Co Publications, 1998. Contains information on writing style, program planning, and budgeting. Includes checklists and indexes.
15. Miner, Lynn E., Jerry Griffith and Jeremy T. Miner. PROPOSAL PLANNING AND WRITING (2nd ed). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press, 1998. Covers the proposal development process for federal government, private foundation, and corporate funding sources.

16. New, Cheryl Carter and James A. Quick. GRANTSEEKER'S TOOLKIT. New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1998. Reviews each component of fund raising including details on crafting a winning proposal.
17. Robinson, Andy. GRASSROOTS GRANTS: An Activist's Guide to Proposal Writing. Berkeley, CA: Chardon Press, 1996. Provides step-by-step guidance on how to achieve success with proposal writing.
18. WINNING STRATEGIES FOR DEVELOPING GRANT PROPOSALS. Washington, D.C.: Government Information Services, 1999. Presents general guidelines for writing proposals and specific instructions for creating proposals for private sector sources and federal agencies. Actual successful proposals are given for each type.
19. Zimmerman, Lehman & Associates. GRANTSEEKING: A Basic Step-by-Step Approach. San Francisco, CA: Zimmerman, Lehman & Associates, 1998. Directed to novices in the field, the book explains how to research grantmakers' giving through traditional and Online resources. Also includes how to write a letter of intent, with a sample, how to create a good proposal and budget, how to follow up with funders and the role of the board of directors in this process.
20. The Grantsmanship Center (<http://www.tgci.com>)
21. A Guide to Proposal Planning and Writing (from Oryx Press)  
(<http://www.oryxpress.com/miner.htm>)
22. Help with Grant Proposals (from Oryx Press)  
(<http://nonprofit.about.com/cs/cs/helpwithgrants/index.htm>)