

# *Four Key Components of your Grant Proposal*

If you have partners in this project, you should divide the work among your team. Be sure and write a first draft, have it reviewed by members of your team and then create a second draft to be included in the submission. If your specific granting agency uses different headings, use those. If not, you can use the following.

1. Statement of Need
2. Goals and Objectives
3. Project Description
4. Executive Summary

## *The Statement of Need*

The statement of need will enable the reader to learn more about the issues. It presents the facts and evidence that support the need for the project and establishes that you understand the problems and therefore can reasonably address them. The information used to support the case can come from authorities in the field, as well as from your own experience. As you marshal your arguments, consider the following points.

- **First, decide which facts or statistics best support the project.** Be sure the data you present are accurate. There are few things more embarrassing than to have the funder tell you that your information is out of date or incorrect. Information that is too generic or broad will not help you develop a winning argument for your project.
- **Second, give the reader hope.** The picture you paint should not be so grim that the solution appears hopeless. The funder will wonder whether an investment in your solution would be worthwhile.
- **Third, decide if you want to put your project forward as a model.** This approach could expand the base of potential funders. But serving as a model works only for certain types of projects. Don't try to make this argument if it doesn't really fit. If the decision about a model is affirmative, you should document how the problem you are addressing occurs in other communities.
- **Fourth, determine whether it is reasonable to portray the need as acute.** You are asking the funder to pay more attention to your proposal because either the problem you address is worse than others or the solution you propose are better than others.
- **Fifth, avoid circular reasoning.** In circular reasoning, you present the absence of your solution as the actual problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.

The statement of need does not have to be long and involved. Short, concise information captures the reader's attention.

## ***Goals and Objectives***

Objectives are the measurable outcomes of the program. They define your methods. Your objectives must be tangible, specific, concrete, measurable, and achievable in a specified time period. Grantseekers often confuse objectives with goals, which are conceptual and more abstract. For the purpose of illustration, here is the goal of a project with a subsidiary objective:

**Goal:** Our after-school program will help children read better.

**Objective:** Our after-school remedial education program will assist 50 children in improving their reading scores by one grade level as demonstrated by standardized reading tests administered after participating in the program for six months.

Here is another way of thinking about presenting goals:

**Behavioral** — A human action is anticipated.

Example: Fifty of the 70 children participating will learn to swim.

**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.

**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.

**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. You might, for example, use numbers, bullets, or indentations to denote the objectives in the text. Above all, be realistic in setting objectives. Don't promise what you can't deliver.

## ***Project Activities***

By means of the objectives, you have explained to the funder what will be achieved by the project. The methods section describes the specific activities that will take place to achieve the objectives. It might be helpful to divide our discussion of methods into the following: how, when, and why.

**How:** This is the detailed description of what will occur from the time the project begins until it is completed. Your methods should match the previously stated objectives.

**When:** The methods section should present the order and timing for the tasks. It might make sense to provide a timetable so that the grants decision-maker does not have to map out the sequencing on his or her own. The timetable tells the reader "when" and provides another summary of the project that supports the rest of the methods section.

**Why:** You may need to defend your chosen methods, especially if they are new or unorthodox. Why will the planned work most effectively lead to the outcomes you anticipate? You can answer this question in a number of ways, including using expert testimony and examples of other projects that work.

The methods section enables the reader to visualize the implementation of the project. It should convince the reader that your agency knows what it is doing, thereby establishing its credibility.

## ***Executive Summary***

This was assigned before the break and you should have completed your first draft by now. Please complete your "final" draft and hand it in by Tuesday, April 2.

Here you will provide the reader with a snapshot of what is to follow. Specifically, it summarizes all of the key information and is a "sales" document designed to convince the reader that this project should be considered for support. Include:

**Problem** — a brief statement of the problem or need your group 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 money required for the project and what your plans are for funding it in the future (one paragraph); &

**Organization and its expertise**— a brief statement of the history, purpose, and activities of your organization, emphasizing its capacity to carry out this proposal (one paragraph).

## ***Other Sections:***

***For this project, you will not be writing these but most grants will also include:***

- ***Budget***
- ***Background on your organization and staff including previous grants***
- ***Evaluation Plan***
- ***Outreach Plan***

***For more information on grant writing, see: <http://foundationcenter.org/>***