



Project Proposal Writing Module

Introduction

This project proposal writing module is designed to be used by an individual or group to help them prepare funding proposals. This module will explain the basics that need to be kept in mind when crafting a project proposal. Tips for making proposal writing an efficient and effective undertaking will be highlighted. Some templates are also included with this module, which can be used for organizational use or training purposes. These templates are designed to give the opportunity for both organizational and personal development. They are illustrations only of what you might face when preparing a proposal — most donors have a preferred framework for summarizing the essential components of a project. If you are working alone on this module, you may find it helpful to talk over some of the points with someone else.

What is required when proposal writing?

- Attention to detail — you need to follow the donor's instructions explicitly. No two donors are alike.
- An ability to interpret how your group's vision and work fits (or not) a donor's priorities.
- An ability to present your group's work in a clear but compelling way. You need to make a strong case that your work is both unique/special and relevant to a donor's interests. There is a lot of competition for funding.

What are the characteristics of a good proposal?

- Clear, simple language, with a minimum of acronyms.
- Easy to follow, even for someone not familiar with the subject matter.
- A logical link exists between your goal and objectives, your activities and the results you hope to achieve.
- It is consistent with your mission and organizational goals.
- The scope of the proposed project is realistic in terms of your organization's size and resources.

How to begin

Research sources

- Government websites
- Foundations for seminars, conferences, travel for delegates and youth programs
- Small project funds of embassies/high commissions designed for local groups to access.

Learn about the donor

- Learn as much as you can about the potential donor — preferably through the organization's website. Checking a source like Wikipedia will not be enough.

- If it is a private sector source, check if the business/corporation is socially responsible and acceptable to the mine-ban movement. While it is easy to judge which governments you would be unwilling to take funding from, it is not always easy to know the principles and practices of an individual business. *NOTE: A business/corporation may have a foundation funding arm under another name.*
- If you are not familiar with the donor but know other groups that have received funding (either through personal knowledge or through a list of grantees on the donor's website), check with the other grant recipient(s). Some donors are too controlling and/or demanding and should be avoided.

YOUR TURN

*Choose a major donor to research (like the Canadian International Development Agency/CIDA or another government agency). Spend time reviewing their website. Look at their sector priorities, what they will fund and not fund, their countries of interest, etc. Look at what groups/programs they are currently funding. Consider the current government's position on global issues important to the mine-ban movement. Are there any positions/actions that would make your organization uncomfortable about receiving funding from this body?

*Choose a business or corporation to research (e.g., a bank, Coca Cola, a pharmaceutical). Repeat the exercise.

Review the funding guidelines

- Establish if your group meets the basic organizational criteria to be considered for funding. Most donors require an organization to be formally registered; many require an audited financial statement, a formally constituted board, etc.
- Discuss if this funder is a good fit for your organization [*see above*]. If it is a specific 'request for proposal' competition you are considering, discuss if the work you are doing or want to do would fit within the terms of this grant.
- Identify requirements that may not be on hand (e.g., up-to-date CVs of major staff; an organizational chart; a written, formal partnership agreement if you are submitting a joint proposal).
- Decide if it is feasible, given current workloads and proposal requirements, for the organization to meet the deadline to produce a proposal.

Proposal Development

Moving ahead with the proposal

- Map out a timeline for producing the proposal.
- Assemble a team and assign people, as necessary, to prepare different sections of the proposal (e.g., the accountant to prepare a budget according to the required format).
- In setting due dates, factor in extra time, knowing that regular workloads will affect how well people can meet their commitments to developing the proposal. Organize regular check-ins (e.g., by email/meeting) to make sure everyone is on track and identify who may need extra assistance.
- Identify one person to monitor draft deadlines and to coordinate assembling all the proposal components. This person should also ensure that the proposal complies with all the technical

requirements. *NOTE: The latter point is particularly important. It covers the instructions, which can be quite detailed, for producing the proposal (paper size, margins, typeface, font size, allowable length) and submitting the proposal (an email submission, a hard copy submission ...).*

Preparing the budget

- Keep the format as simple as possible and preferably use the budget line item categories already in use by your organization.
- In kind donations are the best friend of small NGOS looking for support from donors if they require a funding 'match' for the grant. *NOTE: Try and introduce a simple tracking system of volunteer hours — e.g., by position (community educators) / activity (bookkeeping).*

Structuring proposals around results

- Most donors require your project to be presented in terms of results — what your activities should help achieve. These are usually termed 'outputs', 'outcomes' and sometimes 'impact'. The CIDA website [see below] has a good section on results-based management (RBM).
- The basic components of a results framework are:
 - Inputs (e.g., education kit) to support ...
 - Activities (training workshops) to contribute to ...
 - Outputs (trained community volunteers) to contribute to ...
 - Outcomes (a cross-country network of campaigners)
- Basic principles of presenting results include:
 - Keep it simple and manageable and appropriate in scale to the size of your group and project
 - Do not have too many objectives, outputs or outcomes. Once you state an output or outcome in a proposal, you have to report against it. Think in terms of summary outcome or output statements.
 - Do not give too many performance indicators or indicators you would have difficulty measuring.

Other preparation tips

- Use the funders' terminology as much as possible. Look how they articulate the problem/need, the concepts and language they use. Check their website and adapt for changes in language as needed. For example: gender equality vs. gender equity; purpose vs. objective; direct/indirect beneficiaries vs. primary/secondary beneficiaries.
- Have the head of your organization review and agree to the final proposal and budget. This includes signing the covering letter to the donor.
- Create an organizational toolkit for future proposals. Keep items in an electronic file and/or paper file — like the audited financial statement, letters of incorporation or registration, current fiscal year budget, basic background information on your mission and visions, Board list, staff CVs, organizational chart. This will make the next proposal writing exercise easier.

Some tools you might need

Many donors require you to present the project components in chart/table form in addition to the narrative summary in a proposal. This helps the donor judge and assess the logical flow of your proposed project, and if you are approaching the work effectively and realistically. They are often also the basis for preparing future reports to the donor, should you receive funding.

Sample Logical Framework Template

Project Purpose: The project objective which addresses the priority development needs of the identified beneficiaries and is achievable within the scope of project activities					
Outcomes Medium term development results achievable within timeframe of project (or at least provide a good indication that they will be achievable in time based on progress so far), and which are the logical consequence of the outputs	Performance Indicators ... that provide evidence the project has achieved stated development outcomes	Outputs Short-term development results that are the immediate consequences of project activities and inputs	Performance Indicators ... that provide evidence the project has achieved stated development outputs	Resources Inputs and/or activities	Assumptions/ Risks/ Mitigation <u>Assumptions</u> Necessary conditions that must exist for project to unfold as planned <u>Risk Indicators</u> Things that might have a negative impact on your assumptions <u>Mitigation</u> Measures you would take to lessen the risks

Sample Activity Plan Template #1

Expected Results	Activities	Verifiable Indicators	Means of Verification	Assumptions and Risks
Increased media coverage of mine related issues ...	Press conference	# of articles and broadcasts	-media scan	Assumption: Good range of media outlets will cover press conference Risk: Another event or story considered more newsworthy

Sample Activity Plan Template #2

Activity No.	Brief description of the activity	Jan 12	Feb 12	Mar 12	Apr 12	May 12	Jun 12	Jul 12	Aug 12	Sep 12	Oct 12	Nov 12	Dec 12
1	Quarterly planning workshops	x			x			x			x		
	Output Indicators					Outcome Indicators							
1	Campaign strategy developed and approved					# of members using the plan in their own work							

Sample Work Breakdown Structure

KEY ACTIVITY	Year 1				Year 2				Person/position responsible
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	
Annual members meeting			x				x		ED, Advocacy Officer

YOUR TURN

- * Take a project you would like to do or choose one already undertaken by your group.
- * Apply the content to the above sample templates. This will help you articulate outputs and outcome statements, and think about appropriate performance indicators.

Resources

For campaign content

- www.icblcmc.org. This website provides links to the ICBL and CMC campaigns, as well as to the annual *Monitor*.
- Check out the Cartagena Action Plan from the Second Review Conference of the landmines treaty. This gives benchmarks for action over the five-year period leading up to the next review conference in 2014.

For general development content

- CIDA website (www.acdi-cida.gc.ca). This French/English website provides good background information on global development priorities like the Millennium Development Goals and donor issues like aid effectiveness. *NOTE: Any major donor government website would likely cover these points. This one is a fairly easy site to navigate, unlike USAID and the European Commission, for example.*

For proposal preparation tools

- CIDA website, www.acdi-cida.gc.ca, which explains and provides good links to planning and monitoring tools related to results-based management and logical framework analysis.

For proposal preparation tips

- *Writing Effective Funding Proposals Webinar*, prepared by Foot in the Door Consulting for Mines Action Canada's Youth to Youth Network, March 2012.
- *Guide for Writing a Funding Proposal*, www.learnerassociates.net.