Effective Proposal Writing and Fundraising

Participant Handbook

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Section 1 - Grant Searches

A. Different Types of Funders

Basically, there are six types of funders:

1. Federal Government – These grants come and go with the political climate, and are targeted to current issues. They usually require significant amounts of time to complete and are quite detailed. Currently, the federal government is focussing on 'performance based' funding for projects and they are very outcome oriented. They prefer model programs that can be replicated elsewhere and are likely to disburse money somewhat evenly across the country. These grants are highly competitive, and when you decide to write one or compete for their funding, aim for perfection. Talk with the contact person about the grant to learn about your eligibility, how many grants are given out in each cycle and what the unstated priorities are for the year.

2. Provincial Government – These are similar to federal grants, but may not require as much detail. They vary from year to year, so be sure to talk with the contact person and use the most current guidelines to respond to an RFP (Request for Proposal)

3. Foundations & Corporations - In the USA approximately 43,000 Foundations give away at least $8 billion dollars annually. By law, they must give away 5% of their market value assets or interest income each year- whichever is greater. For example, Kellog has a net worth of $6 billion, so they must give away $30 million each year. The RFP's from foundations vary considerably depending on the size and scope of the organization. Foundations are usually more flexible and less exacting in both their application and monitoring process. Sometimes all that is necessary to get started is a phone call and a short letter of inquiry. If they are interested, you will then be asked to write a proposal. It is important to establish a relationship with the Program Coordinators and ask questions about the proposal requirements. Crown corporations such as BC Hydro and BC Tel often support community based initiatives as well, but it is important that you clearly outline what kind of recognition they would receive as a result of their contribution.

4. Business & Industry – Businesses give grants through their own foundations, or give cash awards to deserving projects. This is called "community reinvestment". They want to be good citizens in their community, and also hope to promote a positive image for their company. Local businesses are usually more receptive than large national chains. Describe your project in terms of how it will benefit their organization, as well as the participants. Consider creative requests that don't only involve giving money, such as use of facilities, donating staff time, used equipment, food or company materials. Crown corporations such as BC Hydro and BC Tel often support community based initiatives as well, but it is important that you clearly outline what kind of recognition they would receive as a result of their contribution.

5. Clubs & Organizations – Don't overlook the large number of civic organizations in your community. Network to obtain insider support. Often procedures are quite informal, such as making a request or presentation during a meeting. Sometimes these organizations will adopt a cause over several years. Their support can be leveraged as matching funds for larger grants and community support letters of this nature can be very helpful to your proposal to other funding sources.

6. Aboriginal Community Funding – Funding may be available through Band Councils, Friendship Centres and other Aboriginal organizations. Availability of funding will vary with each situation depending on the funding arrangement that is in place with the Department of Indian Affairs and Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDA) with the Federal Government . If your program is located on reserve, your band or tribal council may be able to help provide direction and focus as you write your proposal. There may even be resources available to hire someone to write grant proposals for your program. If your program is located off reserve, the Friendship Centres are a useful resource for gathering information and support for program design and development; as well as potential funding.

B. How to Find Funders and Evaluate if it's Worth Applying

The most important aspect of deciding which grants to apply for is to find out as much as you can about the organization and the grants they offer before you write a proposal. Grant makers regularly receive and turn down many proposals that do not meet their requirements. This is a waste of everyone's time. Doing your homework always pays off. Do it well and thoroughly. It is more efficient and ultimately more beneficial to send appropriate requests to fewer organizations than to send multiple appeals in the hopes that one may land in the right place.

If your appeal has been well thought out and is within the guidelines of the foundation, the likelihood of your success will be higher. There are not guarantees since there are always many more applications sent than resources to fill a need, a majority are turned down. If you are turned down for funding, call the funders to ask why. With practice you will improve and if your first appeal has been well thought out and is indeed within the guidelines of the foundation, the impression left is a positive one and the next time you try, you may be more successful.

Once you have determined that you are sending your appeal to an interested party, make sure the form of your approach is correct. Many foundations prefer a phone call or a letter of inquiry as the first step. Others want a full proposal with all required documentation. But research, research, research!

Types of Searches

World Wide Web – With the use of the internet, it is now possible to conduct sophisticated grant searches right from your office. By visiting just a handful of sites, you will be able to access an overwhelming amount of information about grants and grant makers. Once you get started you will see that the process can be quite time consuming. However, it is time well spent, because you get the most current information that often is not available in print form until much later and thus have a better chance of beating the competition.

Public Library

Most reference publications are indexed one of four ways:

1. Geographical – identifies foundations that fund programs in a particular city or region. Most funders limit their giving to a specific geographic area.
2. Subject – identifies foundations that have expressed an interest in funding programs in a specific subject field.
3. By Type of Support – used with one of the two approaches above, using a a 'type of support' qualifier can help you focus your search to those who provide specific funds for specific programs and program expenses.
4. Program Type – newer CD Roms also let you search by program categories.

How to Evaluate if a Grant is for You

Before you write a proposal, evaluate your chances of success against the time and energy it will take to develop the proposal. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

	Yes	No	Comments
Does the grant fit our agency priorities?			
Do our priorities match the funders?			
Does the grant address identified needs?			
Do we have staff capable of carrying out the project?			
Do we have the facilities to carry out the project?			
Will the funding be sufficient to accomplish the objectives in the time allotted?			
Are resources and time available to develop a strong proposal?			
Will the grant build on existing strengths and programs?			
Are present/ future funds sufficient to justify the time and effort needed to develop the proposal?			
Do we have the needed cash or in-kind contributions?			
Can we continue the project after the funding ends?			
Does the project have sufficient administrative support?			
Do we meet eligibility requirements?			
Are the odds for funding good? (# of applicants vs. # funded)			

C. Gathering Information about a Grantmaker

Call your prospects before you write your proposal. The contacts you make beforehand are very important. Once you have located a prospective funder, give them a call to request recent information. The information they send you will be more up to date than published materials, will convey information about their corporate culture and subtle nuances as to what styles or approach may be effective. You may request:

- Annual reports
- Proposal guidelines
- Newsletters
- Press releases
- Listing of grants given in the past
- How proposals are evaluated and scored
- Names of past recipients of grants

Remember! When you call an organization for information, be prepared to answer questions about your proposed project. Have answers to questions such as, "How did you determine your program needs?"; "How many students, parents or teachers with your program will benefit?"and "How do you plan to continue the project after grant funds are exhausted?"

Before you write your proposal, consider the following steps whenever possible:

1. Call or visit a past grantee.
2. Call a past reviewer.
3. Contact a program officer and ask about common mistakes applicants make.

Never send out copies of the same proposal to multiple foundations. Take the time to re-write your proposal to reflect the specific focus of each organization and their requirements.

Section 2 - Proposal Writing

What different kinds of proposals are there?

There is a variety of different styles of proposals that respond to or address specific community and program development needs.

One of the most commonly heard of proposals is developed in response to a Request for Proposals (RFP). An RFP is a formal solicitation document inviting binding proposals for delivery of a service or project. The Request for proposal describes the existing situation and asks proponents (an individual or company that submits, or intends to submit, a proposal) to offer their ideas for a solution. It is used when:

a.) the ministry has a situation for which it is not sure of the best solution
b.) in selection of a contractor the ministry wishes to consider factors other than price
c.) the ministry would like to see what the experts suggest
d.) the requirement is complex
e.) the program is new and the ministry would like ideas on how to deliver it
f.) the ministry would like to see if there is an alternative to the way it usually acquires the product or service

How does a Request for proposal differ from an Invitation to Quote?

The Request for Proposal differs from the invitation to quote in that with a Request for Proposal the ministry evaluates responses against a variety of criteria, as opposed to an Invitation to Quote where the winner is generally the lowest bidder who meets the specification. In the Request for Proposal, price is generally just one of the evaluation criteria. Other criteria could include such factors as the proponent's experience, skills of the proposed project team. Appropriateness and creativity of proposed solution, or the proponent's sensitivity to the needs of the ministry and its clients.

What steps does the Request for proposal go through?

The following bullets roughly chart the steps in the process:

- The ministry identifies a need
- The Purchasing Commission may be consulted and options assessed
- The Request for proposal is drafted and evaluation criteria determined
- The Request for proposal is issued
- Proposals are received and evaluated
- A winner is selected and unsuccessful proponents notified
- A contract is negotiated and signed
- Work is performed

The Proponent's Guide: Responding to a Request for Proposal is available free of charge through the British Columbia Purchasing Commission:

B.C. Interior	(250) 828 – 4322
Vancouver Island and the rest of B.C.	(250) 387 - 7300

Letter Proposals

A letter proposal is a short grant proposal, usually tow to four pages long. Written in letter form, it is primarily targeted to private sponsors, such as foundations and corporations, though it can be viewed as a pre-proposal for federal sponsors. Most federal program officers like to receive a letter proposal because it presents them with a 'concept paper' or a 'conceptual shell' of what you propose.

With many private sponsors, the letter proposal is all that is required; they make funding decision on the basis of your brief letter, whether you are asking for $100 or $1 million. However, some private sponsors use the letter proposal as a screening device and request an expanded proposal if your idea captures their interest. In either case, you face the challenge of clear, concise writing.

In certain respects, a short proposal is more challenging to write than a long proposal. In seven brief sections, you must anticipate and answer the major questions that the sponsor will be asking as your letter proposal is read. Each sentence must carry a heavy load of information. The components of a letter proposal are as follows:

Part One: Summary – Summarize the entire proposal in one sentence. The elements of the sentence include (1) self-identification (your organizational name); (2) uniqueness (your claim to fame); (3) sponsor expectation (what you want them to do); (4) budget request (how much money you want); (5) project benefit (major project outcomes)

Part Two: Sponsor Appeal – Explain why you are approaching this sponsor. Remember to research the sponsor beforehand! Identify the values that the sponsor seems to cherish by reviewing their previous funding patterns ie: high-risk youth, environmental, cutting-edge research projects etc…

Part Three: Problem – Briefly summarize the current problem focusing from the sponsor's perspective, not yours. You must show how funding your project can help them to reach their end goal- their mission. Document gaps in services with statistics, quotations, reasoning, or surveys and express it in human terms. Be brief but clear and don't be excessive with statistics.

Part Four: - Solution – Describe your approach to the problem. Summarize the objectives that will meet with your objectives. Detail your methodology in a one-page attachment by use of a time and task chart but do not include extensive detail in a letter proposal.

Part Five: Capabilities – Establish your credentials to do the project. You must demonstrate the credibility and uniqueness about your group and staff in order to show that you can solve the problem.

Part Six: Budget – Request a specific dollar amount in the proposal. Base your request on a reasonable amount as viewed by the sponsor. Express your request in meaningful units ie: hours of instruction, numbers of students etc..

Part Seven: Conclusion – Identify the desired action you wish the sponsor to take. Identify a contact person for more details if requested. Have an Executive of your organization sign the letter.

Proactive Proposals

This style of proposal is developed as a result of a specific community need and can be developed at anytime throughout the year. When no specific format or guidance is given by a funding source, it is safe to generally assume that the proposal should be no more than 15 pages in length (single – spaced) and should include the following sections:

- Qualifications of the Organization
- Problem Statement or Needs Assessment
- Program Goals and Objectives
- Methodology
- Evaluation
- Future Funding
- Budget
- Appendices

The development of this style of proposal is a pro-active approach that recognizes a community need and offers a plan to fill the need. Instead of waiting for an RFP or Invitation for Tender, the proposal is a direct result of a community needs assessment.

After completing a needs assessment, you probably have a good understanding of the community members' vision of their community that they wish to bring into reality. You will also understand both the resources available for, and the limitations on, realizing that vision.

Priorities are best established by considering three variables:

1. the communities long-term and short-term goals
2. the resources available for different programming
3. the level and kinds of need in your community

Once you have established a clear community need and program to address the need, it is time to write your proposal and search for a grant-maker that addresses your specific program type.

B. Needs Assessment Methods

1. Key Informant Method

The Key Informant Method of needs analysis gathers information from community residents who are in a good position to know what needs the community is currently experiencing. Their knowledge has been gained through professional training and/or their affiliations with particular organizations, agencies, associations, or groups.

While each community will have its own key informants, these informants are often found among the following: Elders; elected officials (band council), spiritual leaders; bankers; public safety officials; school, hospital and agency administrators; leaders of public service organizations; and professionals in specific service areas (accountants, nurses, teachers)

The key informant approach to information gathering is to conduct brief interviews or surveys. After the interview or survey information has been gathered, the people sponsoring the assessment may 'feedback' their findings to the key informants. This feedback step may help stimulate additional insights into community needs.

Implementing the Key Informant Method

1. Compile a list of key informant names
2. Decide how data will be collected (ie: questionnaires, interviews, small or large group meetings or a combination of these)
3. Construct the questionnaire or interview form
4. Gather the data
5. Organize the data (ie: by theme or topic)
6. Interpret the data
7. Schedule a feedback meeting with informants and present your findings. Discuss your interpretations and their interpretations of the information)

2. The Public Forum Method

The public forum method of needs assessment can be used to gain information from a wide range of community members. The basic method of the public forum approach is to hold group discussions at a series of public meetings. Your organization offers an open invitation to the community to attend these meetings.

Implementing the Public Forum Method

1. Develop a list of discussion questions ie: What are the most important needs facing this community? Why are these needs important? What has been done to meet these needs? How have past efforts failed to meet these needs?
2. Select a strategically located place for the initial meeting. The meeting location must be one that encourages, both geographically and socially, an open and candid

expression of ideas ie: easily accessible; free of restrictive or authoritarian associations such as the Band Council building
3. Publicise the purpose, date and place of the meeting. Use a variety of publicity methods such as posters, letters of invitation, personal invitations, radio etc..
4. Have one or two persons introduce the meeting to participants. Make the reasons for the meeting clear.
5. Have a person responsible for recording ideas and suggestions.
6. Encourage participants to decide on the topic for the next meeting.
7. From among the participants, gather a volunteer committee to organize the next meeting.
8. Be aware that the public forum approach is less predictable and controlled than other methods. As much as possible, community members are encouraged to take over the process.

3. The Survey Method

The survey method of needs assessment can be used to gather information from a wide range of people by means of a set of specific questions. The information is gathered through a carefully developed survey questionnaire and is administered to individuals who are identified through a sampling procedure. The survey method requires at least some training or experience in the development of survey instruments and in sampling procedures.

Implementing the Survey Method
There are various ways to implement a survey: face-to-face interviews, hand distribution and collection of survey instruments, self-administered questionnaires completed by respondents in groups, telephone interviews and mailed questionnaires. The cost of implementation for each type of survey differs, as well as the time needed to complete the survey, the ‘refusal rate’ (people not responding) and the extent and type of training needed by support staff.

4. The Focus Group Method

The focus group method of needs assessment is intended to encourage maximum creative participation among group members. The input from all participants is required, and the method takes advantage of each person’s knowledge and experience. Focus groups can be used to generate and clarify ideas, reach consensus, prioritize needs and make decisions on alternative courses of action.

Implementing the focus Group Method

There are many variations of this method. The general approach is as follows:

1. Gather large or smaller groups.
2. Divide larger groups into smaller groups of between 6 and 20.
3. Members of each group write their ideas on paper.

4. Each person discusses her/his ideas and all concerns are listed on a chart or board.
5. The group discusses, clarifies, and evaluates each idea.
6. In a silent ballot, each person assigns a priority to the ideas.
7. Group priorities are tallied.
8. The groups discuss their final list of priorities.
9. A summary feedback report is prepared and distributed to all participants.

5. The SWOT Analysis Method

Strategic program management and planning is a continuous activity rather than one that is done once, then complete. To keep your program planning in line with changing conditions and emerging needs, you need to perform analysis as a regular procedure.

SWOT analysis is a method of doing such a regular scan of conditions affecting program development in your community. SWOT analysis looks at four key areas:

1. assessing the community's Strengths – S
2. assessing the community's Weaknesses – W
3. assessing external and internal Opportunities – O
4. assessing external and internal Threats – T

The objectives of conducting regular SWOT analyses are to:

1. stay current and keep your program planning on track
2. enhance your organization's ability to be proactive rather than reactive in its work
3. identify emerging opportunities in a timely fashion
4. address emerging problems in a timely fashion

SWOT analysis is a tool you can use within your agency and/or in your community. The advantage of SWOT analysis is that it can be done relatively quickly using existing information. The disadvantage is that the analysis is less detailed than that achieved using other methods.

C. Guidelines for Writing Proposals

The general purpose of any proposal is to persuade or convince the readers to do something such as funding a project or to assist with the implementation of a program that you would like to launch. The proposal must convince the prospective donor of two things:

1. That a problem or need of a significant size exists
2. That the applicant agency/community has the resources and innovation to solve the problem or meet the need.

The proposal offers a plan to fill a need and your reader will evaluate the plan according to how well your written presentation answers questions about

WHAT you are proposing
HOW you plan to do it
WHEN you plan to do it
And
HOW MUCH it is going to cost

The most basic composition of a proposal, similar to other written documents such as an essay, is simple; it has a beginning (introduction), a middle (the body of the material to be presented) and an end (the conclusion/recommendation).

Major Headings of a Proposal

Cover Letter………………1 – 2 pages

Executive Summary….……½ - 1 page

Introduction……………….1 – 2 pages

Statement of Need…………2 – 4 pages

Program Objectives………..1 – 2 pages

Program Methodology………..4+ pages

Evaluation………………….1 – 2 pages

Future Funding………………..1/2 page

Budget…………………………1 page

Conclusion………………….1/2 page

Although the composition of the proposal may seem simple, there are basic elements that most foundations and government funding agents expect to see in each section of the proposal.

COVER LETTER – A cover letter serves as the organization's introduction and should ALWAYS accompany a proposal. The cover letter should include the following:

- Includes the funder's name, title and address
- Is written to the individual responsible for the funding program (not addressed "To Whom it May Concern" or "Dear Sirs" etc..)
- Provides a brief overview of the organization and mandate
- Includes the reason for the funding request
- Includes amount requested (if required by the funder)
- Does not exceed two pages (one page is sufficient)
- Includes name and phone number of contact at the organization
- Is signed by the person who can speak with authority on behalf of the organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – This section clearly summarizes your request and provides the reader with a framework that will help him/her visualize the project. The remainder of the proposal will then serve to deepen the 'vision' presented in the summary. The summary should be brief (limited to several paragraphs, half a page at most), clear and interesting. It should include the following:

- Appears at the beginning of the proposal
- Identifies the grant applicant
- Includes total cost, fund already obtained and amount requested in this proposal
- Includes at least one sentence on each of the following

-Credibility
-Problem
-Objectives
-Methods

INTRODUCTION: Usually 1 – 2 pages in length, this section should describe the agency's qualifications for funding and establishes it's 'credibility'. The programs and accomplishments of the organization will be examined in light of how they address current demographics, social issues etc… In addition to convincing the funder of the extent of the need for the proposed project, the agency must also demonstrate that theirs is the appropriate agency to conduct the project. The Introduction should include the following:

- Clearly establishes who is applying for funds
- Briefly addresses the rationale for the founding of the organization
- Describes the applicant agency's purposes and long-range goals
- Describes the applicant's current programs and activities
- Describes applicant's clients
- Provides evidence of the applicant's accomplishments
- Offers statistical support and quotes/endorsements of accomplishments

- Supports qualifications in area of activity in which funds are sought (ie: research, training etc..)
- Describes qualifications of key staff members
- Provides other evidence of administrative competence
- Leads logically to the Statement of Need
- Is as brief as possible but still interesting

STATEMENT OF NEED: This section describes what needs will be met, background on the situation (reason why project is needed) and the problems that will be solved. This is a very important part of the proposal and the information provided in this section should be based on objective research that justifies the need. This data, however, should not be too lengthy, but sufficient to demonstrate that a problem or need exists. (Usually 2- 4 pages depending on the focus of the proposal) It should include the following:

- Describes the target population to be served
- Defines the community problem to be addressed and the need in the geographical area where the organization operates
- Is related to the purposes and goals of the applicant agency
- Is of reasonable problem solving dimension – can't 'save the world'
- Is supported by relevant statistical evidence
- Is supported by the community and with statements from authorities
- Is stated in terms of clients' needs and problems – not the applicant's
- Is developed with input form clients and community stakeholders
- Makes no unsupported assumptions
- Is free of technical jargon

OBJECTIVES: This section states the benefits of the project in measurable terms. It is a clear description of what the organization hopes to accomplish (usually 1-2 pages). It should include the following:

- At least one objective for each problem or need committed to in the problem statement
- Objectives are outcomes
- Objectives are not methods
- Describes the population that will benefit from the program
- States the time by which objectives will be accomplished
- Objectives are measurable and realistic

There are at least four types of objectives:

1.) **Behavioral** – A human action is anticipated
Example: Fifty of the seventy children participating will learn to swim.

2.) **Performance** – A specific time frame within which a behaviour will occur, at an expected skill level, is expected.
Example: Fifty of the seventy children will learn to swim within six months and will pass a basic swimming 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 groupo of children in the future.

METHODOLOGY: This section describes the activities planned to meet the objectives It also includes the rationale for choosing a particular approach. Generally, a straightforward, chronological description of the operations of the proposed project works most effectively (usually 4+ pages). The methodology should include the following:

- Clearly describes program activities
- States the reasons for the selection of activities
- Describes sequence of activities
- Describes staffing of program
- Describes clients and client selection
- Presents a reasonable scope of activities that can be accomplished within the time and resources of the program
- Provides a timeline of activities (if possible)

EVALUATION: This section describes how you will determine the success of your project and whether your project objectives were met. (usually 1- 2 pages) this section is extremely important as funders pay particular attention to evaluation methods since they need help determining whether a proposed project represents an intelligent investment for them. The evaluation section should include:

- A plan for evaluating accomplishment of objectives
- A plan for evaluating and modifying methods over the course of the program
- Tells who will be doing the evaluation and how they were chosen
- Clearly states evaluation criteria
- Describes how data will be gathered
- Explains any test instruments or questionnaires to be used
- Describes the process of data analysis
- Shows how evaluation will be used for program improvements
- Describes any evaluation reports to be produced

FUTURE FUNDING: This section describes how the project will continue beyond the grant period and/or availability of other resources. (usually ½ page) It includes the following:

- A specific plan to obtain funding if program is to be continued
- Describes how maintenance and future program costs will be covered (if applicable)
- Describes how other funds will be obtained
- Includes list of other funders approached on behalf of the project (name of funder, date of proposal, amount requested, current status)

- Has minimal reliance on future grant support
- Is accompanied by letter of commitment
- Does not indicate that the agency will approach the funder for additional money

BUDGET: This section clearly shows costs to be covered by the grant and those provided by other funding agents. It outlines both administrative and program costs. If a proposal is for a specific project, separate budgets for the general operating budget and the special project budget should be included. Budgets should show income as well as expenses and should be structured in columns, listing the expense on the left and the dollar amount in the right column, according to general bookkeeping principles. Budgets should not be submitted in narrative form.

Budget expense information should differentiate personnel costs such as salary and benefit information, and non-personnel expenses such as facility costs (rent/mortgage, utilities, maintenance, taxes) fundraising expenses, travel, postage, equipment costs, supplies and insurance. These should be reflected in both the expense and income columns.

Sources of income should be listed separately, as part of budget information. Sources should be actual funders, not prospective funders. However, pending proposal may be listed separately. Sources for funding may include fees for service, government funds, corporate/private grants, individual donations etc.. The budget should include the following:

- Reflects the proposal narrative
- Is detailed in all aspects
- Includes project costs that will be incurred at the time of the program's implementation
- Contains no unexplained amounts
- Includes all items asked of the funding source
- Includes all items paid for by other sources
- Includes all volunteers
- Includes all consultants
- Details fringe benefits, separate from salaries
- Separately details all non-personnel costs
- Includes separate columns for listing all donated services
- Includes indirect costs where appropriate
- Is sufficient to perform the tasks described in the proposal

Budget Narrative: A narrative portion of the budget is used to explain any unusual line items in the budget and is not always needed. If costs are straightforward and the numbers tell the story clearly, you will not need a budget narrrative. If a budget narrative is needed, you can structure it in one of two ways. You can create "Notes to the budget" with footnote-style numbers on the line items in the budget keyed to numbered explanations. If an extensive or more general explanation is required, you can structure the budget narrative as straight text.

CONCLUSION: Every proposal should have a concluding paragraph or two. This section is the place to make a final appeal for your project. Briefly reiterate what your organization wants to do and why it is important. Stress why your agency needs funding to accomplish it. Don't be afraid at this point to use some emotion to firm up your case.

The conclusion should emphasize the benefits that the reader will realize from your solution to the problem and should urge the reader to action. It should be encouraging, confident and assertive in tone.

D. Writing a 'Reader Friendly' Proposal

While you obviously spend much time working on the content of your proposal, you should also pay attention to the appearance or design of your proposal. Your reader's first initial impression is very important. If you consider the funders own publication styles and preferences when formatting your proposal it will be received as a familiar and friendly proposal. When appropriate use the same type size, layout and headers as they do in their publications.

The proposal should be presented neatly. The cover letter should be typed on the nonprofit organization's letterhead and it is not necessary to include an index or table of contents. The majority of the time the proposal should not be submitted with binding, as funders often need to make copies of it to distribute to review committees for consideration. Although, funders often have specific requirements for the format of the proposal and you may be required to submit the proposal in the required form.
For Example: Responding to an RFP; you often have to submit 5 or 6 copies and you may want to bind them for presentation sake

Here are some tips for your Proposal appearance:

- Leave plenty of white space on each page
- Use a dark ink on light paper
- Be generous with margin space
- Use clear and attractive photographs to illustrate a point; nothing too busy
- Limit your use of color to highlight
- Use boxes, bullets, italics and underlining to highlight
- Don't use capital letters to emphasize large blocks of text
- Type size of headings should be noticeably larger than the text
- Choose a solid, plain typeface which is easy to read
- Don't combine many different typefaces on the same page
- Always number the pages
- Make sure each copy of the proposal has all of its pages
- Keep all attachments pertinent to the proposal
- Avoid cross-references to other sections in the proposal; when possible
- Use a binding method that works, even if it's only a staple. The pages shouldn't fall out when the evaluation committee reads your proposal

Using Plain Language

Your proposal should be easy to read and understand. Use 'plain language' and write in short, clear sentences in your writing. Plain language emphasizes clarity. With plain language techniques you can get your reader interested, highlight your most important information and make sure that your message is delivered in the most effective way possible. Clear and simple are the goals for paragraphs and sentences to make sure you say what you really mean. Errors can also be distracting, so your spelling and grammar should be accurate.

Tips on writing style:

- Limit each paragraph to one idea
- Don't overload sentences.
- Use active rather than passive voice
- Do not use slang or acronyms unless absolutely necessary, and then explain
- Keep paragraphs short; use headings and subheadings
- Write your proposal from the point of view of those who will benefit from it. Talk about their needs and how your program will help.
- Use simple, everyday words instead of unfamiliar words
- Link your ideas
- Emphasize the positive
- Avoid double negatives; cut out unnecessary words
- Avoid using jargon
- Explain complex ideas

E. Basic Do's and Don'ts of Proposal Writing

DO:

- ⇒ Use up to date computer software to make your proposal look as professional as possible.
- ⇒ Pay attention to details and follow the RFP guidelines exactly.
- ⇒ Deliver your proposal by the deadline.
- ⇒ Make each proposal unique and target it to the specific funder.
- ⇒ Assess your organization's preparedness to apply for the particular grant
- ⇒ Determine if you have found an appropriate funder.
- ⇒ Evaluate your proposal.
- ⇒ Have outside readers review your proposal for clarity.
- ⇒ Be sure the information you present is accurate.
- ⇒ Describe how your work complements, but does not duplicate, the work of others.
- ⇒ Start with planning, then writing.
- ⇒ Request specific information.

DON"T:

- ❑ Use an overly emotional appeal.
- ❑ Paint a picture so bad that the solution seems hopeless.
- ❑ Be critical of other projects or organizations.
- ❑ Submit proposals that are not targeted closely enough to the funder's goals and objectives.
- ❑ Overly complicate, so the reader is not sure what the applicant will really be doing with the money
- ❑ Use exaggerated claims instead of facts.
- ❑ Argue with funder requirements.
- ❑ Argue with program managers.
- ❑ Use so many quotes and references that your proposal contains no original thinking.
- ❑ Write your proposal out by hand.
- ❑ Write a budget that doesn't add up and doesn't match your program description.
- ❑ Inflate the budget or underestimate expenses.