

Grant Writing 102

Writing a Successful Grant Proposal

Common Mistakes

- A well-written proposal for a poorly designed project



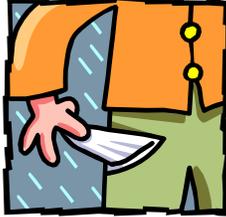
Common Mistakes

- Emotional appeals



Common Mistakes

- Pleading poverty



Common Mistakes



- Need Statement:
What WE EXPERTS
think THEY need to
know

Common Mistakes

- "Let's develop a
new program!
Then let's go
market it to people
who will use it!"



Common Mistakes



- The shopping list

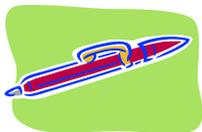
Common Mistakes

- Ferraris and Jalopies



Common Mistakes

- "Trinkets and Trash"



Common Mistakes

- Putting all the grantmaker's buzz words in the first paragraph...and nowhere else



Common Mistakes

- Alphabet Soup: "The OFSWCD has worked closely for eight years with ODNR-DSWC, -DOW and -DNAP, using the NAAEE guidelines, to present WET, WILD, PLT, and FLP..."



Common Mistakes

- Edspeak: "This project features hands-on, minds-on activities that draw upon the multiple intelligences of learners, evaluated through authentic and diverse assessment..."



Common Mistakes

- If we offer it, they will come



Common Mistakes

- “Drive-by workshops” with no follow-up



Common Mistakes

- The \$50 hotel room



Common Mistakes

- The Donato's Pizza Proposal (words cover the page from edge to edge)



Common Mistakes

- Lost-without-a-roadmap



Common Mistakes



...for only \$25,000!

Common Mistakes

- Benchmarking, yes!
Plagiarizing, no.



Common Mistakes

"I'll have my (principal) (mother-in-law) (state legislator) write a letter of support about what a great idea this is..."



Common Mistakes

- "Wet Ink Specials" –
Not finishing a draft proposal early enough for your grant writing buddy or the grant maker to provide you comments and suggestions



Parts of a Proposal

- Need or Problem Statement
- Goal/Objectives
- Activities
- Timetable
- Personnel or Organization Qualifications
- Outcome Measurements
- Continuation Plan
- Budget Spreadsheet and Narrative



Need or Problem Statement (What's Missing Now?)

- Enable the grant maker to understand the problem that the project will address
- Audience or client's need, not your need as a provider organization
- Relate to your organization's mission



Need or Problem Statement (What's Missing Now?)



- Support with facts or evidence from authorities, or from your own experience
- Show the benefits of meeting this need

Do your data support the need?

- Make sure statistics are accurate and attributed
- Local data that relates to your project and organization is better than generic data
- Balance the data with the scope of the project



Can you give the reader hope?

- Don't paint a hopeless picture
- Avoid overly emotional appeals
- Avoid overstatement
- Be professional!



- Example: "Breast cancer kills, but statistics prove that regular check-ups catch most breast cancer early. Hence a program to encourage check-ups will reduce the risk of death from breast cancer."



Is the need acute?

- You are asking the grant maker to pay more attention to *your* proposal, because *either*:
 - the problem you address is worse than others,
or
 - the solution you propose makes more sense than others working on the same problem.
- Is your problem more acute, or is your solution better?

If your project is better than others...

- Be careful not to be critical of others working on the same problem
- Grant makers want to see collaboration
- Show that you are on good terms with others working on the same problem
- (Remember, you might be collaborating with them on the *next* grant proposal!)

Is your project (really) a model?

- How does the problem you are addressing apply to other communities?
- Is your approach likely to work better for some audiences or communities than others?
- Don't make this argument if it doesn't really fit! Expect that grantmakers will follow up.

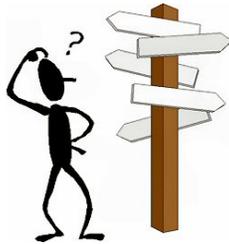
Circular Reasoning

- Avoid presenting the absence of your solution as the actual problem
- Example: “The problem is that we have no pool in our community. Building a pool would solve the problem.”



Example of a Need Statement

- “In a 2008 survey, 65% of the septic system installers in our county admitted having difficulty understanding which new HSTS regulations apply to them. 50% said they would not be comfortable calling a regulatory agency to ask that question.”



Objective: Where do we want to be when we're finished?

- Example: “Our after-school program will help children read better.”



Better example:

- Better: "Our after school remedial education program will assist 50 children in improving their reading scores by one grade level. Progress will be demonstrated on standardized reading tests administered after participating in the program for six months."

Objectives

- Specific
- Measurable
- Appropriate
- Realistic
- Time-bound

Examples

- At least 50 of the 70 children participating will show reduced levels of lead in the bloodstream within six months
- A network of 60 local volunteers will learn to sample water quality weekly at ten locations throughout the watershed for two years. They will share their data with local residents and schools, and post it to the state's Level 1 Credible Data Website.

Objectives vs. Activities

- OBJECTIVES explain what the project will achieve (where we want to be when we're finished.)
- ACTIVITIES are the specific steps that will achieve the objectives. How do we get there (the objective) from here (the current need)

Activities: How do we get there from here?

- Activities answer the who, what, where, when, why, and how questions
- Provide a detailed description for the duration of the project
- Explain the sequence and timing

Activities: How do we get there from here?

- Why will these activities lead to the outcome you anticipate? Relate back to the objective
- You may need to defend your choice of activities
- Specific activities make it possible for you to develop the project budget

Sample Objective

The students will create and maintain an environmental home page in our computer lab

- - Activity One:
- - Activity Two:



Better: If the *Objective* is to improve 150 students' computer and analytical skills...

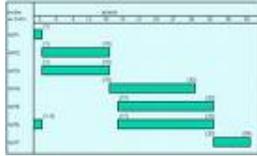
- Activity one: Analyze the content of a Web page
- Activity two: Compare two Web pages on the same environmental topic
- Activity three: Create a home page about this class's environmental projects

Practice Activity: Sorting out Objectives and Activities



Timetable

- Clarify which months each activity will take place during
- Remember to sequence activities
- Include time for preparation, participant input, mid-point evaluation, course corrections if needed, and final evaluation



Personnel/Organization Qualifications

- Why are you the one for the job?
- Brief biographical sketches (or job description if not hired yet)
- Evidence of accomplishments
- Endorsements from others
- Stick to what's relevant for the project



Outcome Measurements

- Pre-test to establish baseline level
- Expectations made clear at the outset
- Assess at several stages during the project
- Encourage participants to do self-assessment

Quantitative Indicators

- Exit survey (multiple choice, Likert scale)
- Pre-test and post-test
- Workshop attendance figures
- Grades
- #visitors to exhibit or Web site
- # requests for information received
- #pounds of recycled materials
- Rentals or check-outs of videotapes

Qualitative Indicators

- Questionnaire (open-ended)
- Personal interview
- Observation – anecdotal
- Rubric
- Portfolios

Project Evaluation: Things to Think About

- Correlation is not causation:
There may be multiple explanations for your good results
- Cost of evaluation relative to overall project
- Takes time to do well
- Must be designed in early



Project Evaluation: Things to think about...

- Lessons learned from UNsuccessful projects
- Purpose of your evaluation



“Summative Evaluation” (e.g., for reports to the grantmaker)

- Did the program work?
- Did it attain its goals?
- Were the desired outcomes for participants achieved, and were they worth the cost?
- Should the program be continued?

“Formative Evaluation” (to make an ongoing program better)

- What are the program’s strengths and weaknesses?
- Are participants progressing toward desired outcomes?
- Which participants do better than others and why?
- Can we operate the program more efficiently without compromising quality?

Program Evaluation Resources

- WK Kellogg Foundation's Evaluation Handbook
www.wkcf.org/pubs/tools/evaluation/pub770.pdf



More Evaluation Resources

- Centers for Disease Control's Framework for Program Evaluation for health programs
<http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework.htm>



More Evaluation Resources

- Rubrics for Selecting Outstanding Grant Projects
www.epa.state.oh.us/oeef/oeef_featured_ee_projects.html



More Evaluation Resources

- MEERA Environmental Education Evaluation Research Assistant
<http://meera.snre.umich.edu/>



Continuation Plan

- What happens when the project ends?
- How can you share the results of your project with others?
- What mistakes can you help others avoid?



Detailing a Budget

- Personnel
- Non-Personnel
- Contractual



Personnel

- Salary/wages: number of hours times hourly rate for each position, or % of time @ what salary
- Benefits and how calculated
- Rule of thumb: benefits roughly 1/3 of salary
- Job description if not hired yet



Non-personnel

- Supplies (consumables): itemized, unit price, totaled
- Equipment: itemized, unit price, totaled
- Printing: number of copies times unit price, totaled
- Travel: miles at specified reimbursement rate, or per diem per traveler
- Allow for breakage
- Remember the Buick!



Contractual

- Describe the service being provided
- Name or organization or individual providing the service (or copy of RFP)
- Number of hours times hourly rate
- Grant makers scrutinize closely for contractors' padded indirect costs

Budget Scrutiny

- Reviewers are like parents whose teenager requests \$50 for some “educational” software...



No Brainers

- “Attend the 2001 National Organization of Scientists for Teaching Renewable Energy Sources symposium in Hawaii”
- “Cost: \$50,000”



Executive Summary (write me last!)

- Provide overview of the project
- Include at least a sentence on each of the parts of the proposal requested by the grant maker
- This is the big “pitch”
- Some reviewers will see only this summary

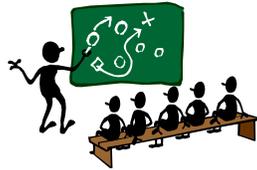
Letters of Support

- “This is a much-needed project, and this organization is terrific, just the one to do it right.”
- That’s nice.



Letters of Collaboration

- If someone’s participation/permission is crucial to make the project happen, have them write *specifically* what they will do or provide
- Coach them, or they will write a generic support letter
- Allow enough time to assemble these letters



How to tell the good, the bad, and the ugly...

- The need is a documented need of the target audience
- The objectives are measurable, specific and appropriate for meeting the need or solving the problem
- The activities are specific and appropriate for meeting the objectives, and time-bound
- The budget relates directly to the cost of performing the activities
- The evaluation method is valid

A word about innovation...

- Innovative, creative projects make funders' eyes light up
- Administrators (your boss?) want tried-and-true, sound methodologies with a track record of success under similar conditions
- What's a grant applicant to do?



Quick Tips...

- Re-read the guidelines after you've finished the draft
- Understand who will be reviewing the proposal, and tailor your jargon level to their understanding
- Be sure your proposal can pass the Spouse Test

Dew knot trussed yore
spell chequer two fined
awl yore mist aches.

Still More Quick Tips...

- Check your math on the budget
- Check your timeline against the funder's calendar
- Check to be sure you have completed all sections
- Round up needed signatures and collaboration letters



Be concise

- Have mercy on the review panel.
- Go back and cut your proposal length in half.



Try Again

- If your proposal is not funded this round, revise it according to the feedback from reviewers. Address their concerns and answer their questions.
- Listen to hints and tips from the staff of the grant maker organization

Be Careful!
What You Wish For
May Come True!

- Know your organization's limits

Pop Quiz!

- What were the two most important things to remember from this workshop?

Happy Hunting!
