Grant Proposals

General Format

Basic grant proposals for any field vary, but they are usually organized similarly to the following outline (though many applications have specific guidelines for formatting):

Cover Letter/Title Page (1 page): Introduces the applicant(s) and a general mission statement; introduces the purpose of the project and the amount of desired funds; includes a signature of the highest official in the organization (Pullen and Mueller). *TIP: Write this last to ensure all aspects of project are introduced here (Pullen and Mueller).

Abstract/Proposal Summary (3-4 paragraphs, but length varies): Include a description of the applicant, a definition of the problem, a statement of objectives, an outline of the project’s procedures, a description of how the project will be evaluated, a post-project plan, a cost statement, and other means of funding for the project. Abstracts generally include: a purpose statement, specific goals, research design, methods, and significance (Pullen and Mueller). *TIP: Also write this after the full proposal has been written to include every aspect of the project (Pullen and Mueller).

Introduction (at least 1 paragraph): Re-introduce the organization and its mission in more detail. Then, further explain the problem, the purpose of the project, the most important projected outcomes, and the significance (Grant).

Literature Review (at least 1 paragraph): Sometimes this section is optional, but agencies often require it. Plus, it makes for a more convincing project proposal. This section cites all references and explains their importance to the project. This proves to reviewers that you have done enough research (Grant).

Personnel (at least 1 paragraph): Some proposals include personnel requirements for the project. A section for personnel would include staffing qualifications and skills. Curriculum Vitae are generally included as part of this section (Grant), but they may be attached in the appendix.

Project Narrative (at least 1 paragraph, but probably several): Here, the project goals should be written in concise (and convincing) language (all sources). This section may have several subsections wherein the problem, the project goals, hypotheses, methods, procedures, outcomes, and research evaluation are detailed. Applicants should address the purpose of the proposal, the costs and benefits to the organization or community, and the problem. Answer any questions a reviewer might have in this section! Be sure that the connection between your research/hypotheses and the project objectives is clear (Grant).

Project Timeline (at least 1 paragraph, but probably several): This section details each step of the project, including the amount of time each step will take, as well as the resources (people, tools, etc.) that each step involves (Grant). This timeline is sometimes presented as a chart or graph. Be realistic!

Budget Summary (list with explanations, chart, or graph): This section begins with a summary of the budget, and will detail the cost of staff salaries, equipment expenses, and other costs that may be encountered. If the information is presented in a chart or graph following the summary, this information would be on a separate page (Pullen and Mueller). Be realistic with the budget!

Appendix (1 page, followed by appendix documents): This section includes additional documents that applicants may wish to attach (Pullen and Mueller). An appendix page precedes these attachments; the appendix page will list the title of the appendices and the page number that they start on.
Tips for Consultants

Understand what a grant proposal is.
A grant proposal is a request for money from a funding agency to fund a project for the benefit of a community, area of study, or organization.

Become familiar with the grant proposal process. Applicants start planning their project proposals, begin formatting a grant proposal, and ask peers to review their work. This writing/editing/re-writing process should be done long before the application deadline (all sources). After submission, a judging panel reviews the proposal based on criteria specific to their given guidelines, and either grants or denies the funding. Rejected proposals may be revised and resubmitted during the next grant cycle. Recipients of grants may also apply to future grant cycles (as the funding agencies see that their projects are reputable) (Gomez-Cambronero et al.).

Help the student write in clear, concise language that is appropriate for the intended audience.
Peers in the applicant’s professional field will be reviewing the proposal (Gomez-Cambronero et al.). The applicant must seem knowledgeable in the field and well prepared for the execution of the project. Using professional and explicit language, and including relevant resources, will help the applicant seem convincing—which is really important when requesting funds (all sources).

Explain to the applicant that the format for grant proposals vary greatly.
Some proposals are three pages, and some are 20. Applicants need to feel comfortable knowing that there might not be any guidelines specific to the grant they are applying for. As long as the grant proposal is organized, thorough, well researched, innovative, and well planned, the applicant should feel confident in their proposal (Gomez-Cambronero et al.). Even the citation method will vary (science-related topics, like an environmental project, will use APA, while a topic in writing, languages, or literature, like a project about foreign languages, would use MLA).

Ask the student if the funding agency has provided application guidelines.
These guidelines will be more appropriate for the applicant than these, though these guidelines may be useful in the revision process (Gomez-Cambronero et al.).

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has a rubric by which grants are reviewed. This rubric is used in judging proposals: Significance; is the project critical to the field of study? Investigators; who will be conducting the project? Are they qualified? Innovation; does the project explore something new or test a new idea? Approach; will the objectives be met with the proposed approach? Environment; will the resources be adequate to conduct such a project? Will the project be well fostered in the proposed environment? (Gomez-Cambronero et al.)

Works Cited


Grant Proposals (or Give me the money!). The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2012. Web.