The Foundation Center’s

Proposal Writing Basics

Did you take a handout packet?

Please turn off your cell phones!
What You Will Learn Today

• Getting started
• Preparing the proposal
  – Organizing, writing, and packaging It
• Submitting the proposal
• What happens next?
The Proposal is Part of the Process

- Planning
- Research
- Writing
- Communication
Part 1

Getting Started

- Planning
- Researching potential funders
Getting Started

• Are you a credible nonprofit?
• What kind of support do you need?
• Do you have enough time?
Planning

- Information gathering
- Project concept and relevance to mission
- Time frame
- Outcomes
- Cost
Researching Potential Funders

Establishing the match

- What you do: “Field of Interest”
- Where you do it: “Geographic Focus”
- Type of Support
Researching Potential Funders, continued

- Resources
  - Print directories
  - Foundation Directory Online
  - Grantmaker web sites
  - IRS information returns
- Foundation Center’s training programs
Part 2
Preparing the Proposal

- Proposal contents
- Writing the narrative
- Packaging the proposal
Proposal Contents

• Title page and table of contents
• Executive summary – 1 page
• Narrative
  – Statement of need – 2 pages
  – Project description – 3 pages
  – Organization information – 1 page
  – Conclusion – 2 paragraphs
• Budget
• Appendices and supporting materials
The Narrative - Writing Tips

- Begin with an outline
- Name your project
- Keep language clear and simple
- Use action words
- Avoid jargon and acronyms
- Revise and edit
Statement of Need

• Problem or issue to be addressed
• Audience/community
• Supporting facts and statistics
Project Description

• Goals
• Objectives
  – S (pecific)
  – M (easurable)
  – A (chievable)
  – R (ealistic)
  – T (ime-bound)
Project Description, continued

• Methods
• Staffing
• Collaboration
• Replicability
• Evaluation
  – Formative: analyzing the process
  – Summative: measuring the outcome or product
• Sustainability
  – Is the project finite?
  – Could it move toward self-sufficiency?
  – Will it be attractive to other funders?
Budget

- Expenses
  - Direct costs
    - Personnel
    - Non-personnel
  - Indirect costs
- Income
- Budget narrative
Organizational Information

• Mission and history
• Programs
• Board and staff
Conclusion

• Final appeal for your project
  – What you will accomplish
  – Why it’s important
  – Who will benefit
Executive Summary

• When to write it
• What to include
  – Statement of need
  – Goals and objectives
  – Costs of the project and amount requested
  – Background on your organization
Appendices & Supporting Materials

- IRS determination letter
- Financial documents
- Board and staff
- Supporting materials
Packaging the Proposal

- **Cover letter**
  - Reference recent contact
  - Request for funding
  - Proposal contents
  - Offer to meet, answer questions, and provide additional information

- **Proposal**

- **Appendices and supporting materials**
Variations

- Common grant application form?
- Funder’s own application form?
- Initial contact
  - Telephone call?
  - Letter of inquiry?
  - Full proposal?

Follow the funder’s guidelines!
Part 3
What’s Next?

• After the Proposal
Follow-up: Building Relationships

• Telephone conversations
• Information updates
• Board contact?
The Answer is YES!

- Send a thank-you letter
- Keep the funder informed
- The renewal request
The Answer is NO!

• It’s not personal
• Find out why
• Ask about future funding
• Move on; seek other prospects
Help from the Foundation Center

- Libraries including Funding Information Network Partners
- Funding research resources
- Proposal writing courses
- FAQs on proposal writing
- Sample documents
For More Information

• More resources available at http://grantspace.org/Skills/developing-proposals
Thank you for coming!

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