

Anatomy of a Proposal

Heading	Contents	Alternative Heading
Title Page	Name of organization applying for funding; contact information for the institution's authorized official (address, telephone number, fax and email); name of the agency (program title) to which proposal is submitted; project title; dates of the project period; name of the project director (with telephone number); total amount of funds requested; signature of authorized official.	Cover Sheet, Application Form
Table of Contents	Listing of proposal sections with page number references (include a listing of the attachments). Some federal agencies provide their own forms for this page, but even if one isn't provided, the table of contents is helpful for reviewers who should not have to hunt for the relevant parts of the proposal.	Contents
Abstract	Usually no more than one page, this is should be a concise description of the project, emphasizing the objectives, the significance or need, plan of execution, outcomes and dissemination. It may be the most important part of the proposal since it is the portion that can either entice a reviewer to read on or put the proposal aside. Write the abstract last, but give it serious attention. "It should not be an abstract of the proposal, but rather a self-contained description of the activity that would result if the proposal were funded. It should be informative to other persons working in the same or related fields and, insofar as possible, understandable to a scientifically or technically literate lay reader." (NSF Grant Proposal Guide).	Project Description; Executive Summary; Summary
Needs statement	State the problem to be addressed. Identify the target population or the research question upon which the project will have an impact. Consider the potential national, regional and local need to be address by the project. Document the significance of the project for the intended audience/topic. Use data to demonstrate a need for the project, compare it with what has already been done by others, and explain the relationship to the mission of the sponsor or the defined priorities of the funding agency.	Purpose; Questions to be Addressed; Problem Statement
Goals/Objectives	Start with a concise statement of what the project will accomplish. Identify expected outcomes, and relate them to short-term and long-term objectives. Each goal should be a general statement of what will be achieved. Specific, measurable, objectives can then be tied to each goal.	General Objectives; Solutions; Specific Solutions; Expected Outcomes

Project Plan	List the steps the project will execute, when each activity will be started and completed, where it will be done, and who will be responsible for each activity. A chart may be helpful to illustrate an organized plan of action. For research proposals, this section may outline the plan of work, including the broad design of activities to be undertaken, with an adequate description of experimental methods and procedures used, including data analysis, and a schedule or timeline of the work to be done.	Procedures; Research Design; Management Plan; Narrative; Strategies; Action Plan; Operating Plan; Activities
Evaluation	Explain how the success of the project will be measured (refer back to the stated objectives). State how the data will be collected, analyzed and documented. Discuss who will be responsible for this task and what methods will be employed.	Summative and Formative Evaluation; Assessment of Outcomes
Dissemination	Explain how the project results will be made available to others. This may take the form of publications in professional journals, presentations at national/regional meetings, or technical reports. If the project is applicable elsewhere and it is appropriate to include a plan of pilot implementation, be sure to describe this as part of the project plan and make appropriate allowances in the budget.	Distribution of Results; Transferability; Replicability; Utilization Plan
Key Personnel	List the key persons involved in the project and give brief descriptions of the responsibilities and qualifications of each one. Curriculum vitae are usually included in the appendix, so it is not necessary to duplicate the information but rather to provide a summary that documents the ability of the project staff to complete the project. If consultants are to be involved, describe the reason for their involvement, their qualifications and role.	Qualifications; Project Staff; Biographical Sketches
Equipment and Facilities	Particularly important for projects which require unique capabilities and equipment, this section should explain what resources are available and what access will be provided to them in the proposed project. For proposals which do not propose intensive use of equipment or specialized facilities, this section could include a description of the relevant resources provided by the applicant institution (special museum collection, access to a natural resource, unique events for project participants, etc.).	Resources; Institutional Context; Space and Equipment Requirements
Budget	Present a detailed budget for cost categories such as personnel (salaries and fringe benefits), materials and supplies, travel, equipment, contractual costs, participant costs, and indirect costs. If the project includes contributions from the applicant institution or a third party, present a three- or four-column budget with a total of all costs in the final column. Most federal agencies provide their own forms on which the budget request is summarized, but some proposals will also include a detailed budget in the body of the proposal. A brief explanation (Budget Justification) should follow the budget, which justifies each category of funding requested. It is particularly important to show how the requested amounts were calculated and to justify any unusually large request (equipment, for example).	Fiscal Requirement; Project Costs; Financial Resources

Appendices

Curriculum vitae (resumes) of key personnel; letters of cooperation; supporting materials such as a course outline, bibliography, reading lists, reports of consultants. For many private funding organizations, other materials may be required: eg., a letter documenting the non-profit status of an organization, a list of the members of the board of directors, or certain portions of the applicant organization's most recent financial report.

Attachments; Background Materials; Supporting Documents