Proposal Writing for Healthy Communities

Workbook

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Proposal writing can be a good method of raising money for your organization*****. Many organizations, including band councils and other Aboriginal organizations, rely on grants as a primary source of funding for many programs and services. A well-written and well-organized proposal may bring in large amounts of funding to your organization.

You may have a great idea for a project, service, or program that meets a genuine need in your community. However, many organizations may be competing for the same grant dollars, so you must be able to write proposals that are clear, concise, and make a strong case that your organization can achieve important results with the funding received. In order for your idea to be supported by a funding agency, you must also be able to convince them that the project, service, or program you propose is indeed required. An important component of demonstrating need is a proposal that is focused and well laid out. Often, despite a great idea, a proposal is rejected because it is not clear enough to convince funders that you can carry out the project with the available funding.

Probably, you like to approach the many interconnected issues in the community altogether, as a whole. This manual will assist in breaking down a large issue into a project description that is manageable within the project time frame and funding available.

Funding agencies want to see that the money they distribute as grants is put to good use and is used in the most effective manner possible. This manual will provide you with the tools to help you turn your ideas into a proposal that the funders will see has the potential to make meaningful change in your community.

This manual presents a systematic approach to developing a great proposal by outlining steps that are common in most proposals. For those who are new to proposal writing, we have attempted to provide enough information in each section so that you will have all the information you need. For those who are more experienced with developing proposals, it will be a useful reference. **After completing every step in this workbook, you will have a well-written and well-organized proposal that has all the necessary elements that most funding agencies require.**

* In this guide, "organization" refers to the applicant; "agency" refers to the funding body.

Grant opportunities and calls for proposals can come in many forms. You might be interested in funds to operate a particular program or service, or for capital expenditures or equipment. **Whichever grant interests you, the basics of a good proposal are the same: developing a clear program plan, researching the right funder or grant for your idea, and focusing your idea into the terms of the grant.**

This manual discusses the following major components of a proposal:

❖ *The Organization Overview*—presents your organization's qualifications to carry out the proposed project, service, or program (p. 15)

❖ *The Need Statement*—describes the need to be addressed by your organization (p. 19)

❖ *Goals and Objectives*—describes the specific results you intend to achieve (p. 25)

❖ *Activities and Methods*—describes exactly how you will achieve your goals and objectives (p. 29)

❖ *The Evaluation*—describes your plan for how to measure the success of your project (p. 34)

❖ *The Budget*—a line-item summary of your projected expenses (and any revenues) from your proposed project, service, or program (p. 38)

TIP

Ask yourself: Does this information relate to the overall argument I am trying to make? If not, why have I included it?

The first step is to make sure you have fully developed your idea. Do this before you begin to write—you will have a much easier time producing a strong proposal. Your organization may have done some of this work already, so it may be simply a matter of looking at some of your own organization's existing documents. However, it is important to make sure you do some of this strategic planning before you begin the writing.

At this stage, it is a good idea to review your organization's purpose or mission. In your job, you may have some great ideas for new programs and services that you would like to offer. And these ideas may be tied to a real need in your community. However, you must ask yourself whether they fit the mission and how you can tie them in to it.

REMEMBER YOUR AUDIENCE

You should always write for a particular audience. For example, if you were to write a children's book, you would not use complex words. So in a proposal, you direct your writing toward the proposal reviewers.

Try to put yourself in the position of the proposal reviewers. They may have to read hundreds of applications for the same funds. They probably do not spend a large amount of time reading each proposal. You must make sure your proposal can catch the attention of the reviewer on a first quick read. You must make sure it stands out among the many proposals received. Your writing must be clear, concise, and well organized. A well-organized document will have a logical flow throughout the entire document. You do not want your reviewer to have to flip back and forth between pages to get the information the agency needs.

Secondly, it is important to focus your writing toward the particular grant for which you are applying. You must do this even though your idea comes out of your broader vision of the needs of your community.

Key Questions to Consider

In developing your proposal, you might want to ask yourself the following questions:

- ☐ What new projects (or expansions to current programs) is your organization planning for the next 2–3 years?

- ☐ Does your program idea fit within the mission of your organization?

- ☐ Is your program idea already in place in another organization?

- ☐ Does your idea meet a need in your community?

- ☐ Can you document this need?

- ☐ Does your organization have the capacity (staffing, skills, and experience) to meet this need?

- ☐ Does your idea have a well-defined target population? (Target population may also be called "target group" or "client group". It is the group of people your project is intended to service, and is often defined by culture, age, gender, geography, socio-economic status, etc.)

- ☐ Is this a project, service, or program that your community members will want and use?

- ☐ Does your idea improve your organization and/or support its future development?

- ☐ Where can you get support for your project, service, or program?

PROPOSAL IDEA WORKSHEET

❖ Briefly, what is your organization's mission?

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❖ What new projects (or improvements to current programs) are you planning for the next 2–3 years?

Project	Title/Description
I	
II	
III	
IV	

❖ Which of the above projects fit with the mission and vision of your organization?
Note: You will need to strongly justify an application to fund projects that fall outside of your organization's mission and vision.

Project	Fits mission? (Y/N)	Potential problem area(s)
I		
II		
III		
IV		

❖ Are any of these projects currently being done by another organization? Are there possibilities to partner with another organization?
Note: Many funders like to see partnerships between organizations.

Project	Duplication? Y/N)	Possible partnership? (Y/N) If yes, with whom?
I		
II		
III		
IV		

❖ Do your ideas meet the needs of your community?

Project	Community need
I	
II	
III	
IV	

❖ What data do you have or can you collect to prove that there is a need (e.g., community needs assessment, Aboriginal peoples health survey, government statistics, etc)?

❖ Does your idea have a well-defined target population? What is it?

❖ Does your organization have the capacity to deliver each project, service, or program (e.g., enough staff, training, experience, equipment, etc.)? Briefly describe it.

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❖ Is this a service or program that your community members or target population will want and use? How do you know?

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❖ Does your idea support the future development of your organization?

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❖ Where can you get support for your project (e.g., chief and council, community, board of directors, etc.)?

Project	Possible supporters
I	
II	
III	
IV	

CHOOSING A FUNDING AGENCY

By now you have some idea of the types of programs and/or services you think would be a good fit for your organization and that clearly fill a need in your community. You are ready to search for a funding agency that will fund your project idea. Your organization may regularly receive what are known as RFPs (requests for proposals, or proposal calls) from funding agencies. These are announcements that money is available for grants. Or perhaps you may have to do a bit of searching for agencies that grant funds for programs or services specific to your need.

Once you have identified a potential funder, and before beginning the application process, it is a good idea to ask yourself a few questions in order to find out whether your project is in line with the funding criteria.

Key Questions to Consider

☐ What do you need to do to be eligible for this grant?
For example, you may need to find another organization to partner with for your project if the funding agency will only fund collaborative projects. Or you may have to ensure that your organization has charitable status.

☐ When is the proposal due? Do you have enough time and resources to submit a solid proposal?

☐ What form of approval do you need for this grant?
For example, you may need to get a band council resolution or a letter of support from your board of directors or communities that may be involved.

☐ Is this grant open to communities or an organization such as yours?

☐ Does your plan for the initiative match the funding priorities of the funder?

☐ Is the grant a direct award or does it require matching funding or multiple funders?

□ Can your community/organization carry out this project, or would your proposal be strengthened by collaborating with other organizations?

□ What community/national/international information and data do you have regarding our proposal area?

□ Do the demographics of your community match the priorities of the funder?

If you are still unclear about any aspect of the call for proposals, it is always a good idea to contact the funding agency for clarification. Most funders will have a contact person to answer any of your questions. They may be a valuable source of assistance regarding the type of information they are looking for in the proposal.

LETTER OF INTENT

One process used by funders to simplify the proposal call is to request that a Letter of Intent (LOI) be submitted initially, rather than a full proposal. The Letter of Intent outlines your idea, amount of funding needed, and timelines. It is used by funders as a screening process, indicating the number of interested organizations (total $ needed) and areas of proposed projects.

The funder usually has guidelines for what to include in the Letter of Intent. An effective Letter of Intent will attract the reader and give the funder an opportunity to put your proposal at the top of the list when they finalize the proposal call.

To make your Letter of Intent stand out, make sure to
- ❖ **choose words that will draw attention to the potential impact of your project, service, or program;**
- ❖ **stay within page or word limits;**
- ❖ **write in the active voice (see p. 49);**
- ❖ **avoid jargon, slang, and acronyms;**
- ❖ **persuade the reader that your idea has excellent merit and is achievable.**

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

Typically, organizations send letters requesting support for a project to other organizations that have worked with them before or may be involved in the project. It is important to obtain support as early as possible.

If the work involves various Aboriginal communities, you should obtain a letter of support from them for the proposal. In your letter requesting this, you should include the following information:

- ❖ a brief summary of the project including project title
- ❖ potential benefits of their participation
- ❖ the funding source you are applying to
- ❖ specific instructions for writing the letter
- ❖ to whom the letter should be addressed
- ❖ whether to mail, fax, or e-mail it to the funding agency or to your organization

If you mail your letter to them, follow it up with emails and phone calls if necessary, to make sure it reaches them in time for a response.

Most often, supportive organizations will request that you draft the letter of support your want and send the draft copy to them. Sending an electronic copy will allow them to make changes and print the letter of support on letterhead. Submitting a draft to organizations is ideal because it reduces their workload (improving response rate) and allows you to specify items you want them to emphasize.

THE ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW

The main goal of an organization overview, or capability statement, is to assure the funder that your organization is competent in the particular area of the proposal, qualified to address the need/problem, and fiscally sound and responsible.

It does this by specifying who is applying for the grant and establishing your organization's credibility to successfully undertake the project, service, or program—what qualifies your organization to conduct the project, what it will do for the project, and what resources it will bring to the project. This may include community recognition and support, connections, staff, equipment, and infrastructure.

Viewing the organization in terms of its overall service direction is an opportunity to see how programs connect with each other, and how your proposal fits within your organization's vision. If the proposed program does not reflect current services, is there a reason for moving in this direction?

Depending on the funder's guidelines, the content of this section may vary and may be included in the introduction, project description, or a separate section of the proposal.

TIP

A capability statement should accomplish two things:
- ❖ **It should describe your organization's characteristics and its track record.**
- ❖ **It should demonstrate how that track record qualifies your organization to undertake the proposed project.**

A typical organization overview will include most of the following information (depending on the criteria identified and number of pages allowed for each section):

- ❖ mission of the organization (overall philosophy and aims)
- ❖ history of the organization (brief overview of when, why, and how the organization started; may also include geographic service area, population served)
- ❖ organizational resources (description of funding received, grants awarded, funding track record, human resources [staffing qualifications and workload], and material resources [infrastructure] available to the organization)
- ❖ community recognition and support (indication of how the organization is regarded—honours, awards, accreditations, letters of support, etc.)
- ❖ community collaboration and links (support available from other organizations, participation on other boards, connections to national organizations)
- ❖ organization programs (overview of programs, number of people served)
- ❖ organization strengths (characteristics that make the organization particularly suited to undertake the project)

TIP

Once you have completed an organization overview, it is a good idea to keep the information on file for future grant proposals, and update if needed over time.

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION WORKSHEET

Here is a worksheet to help gather the information in an organization overview.

Organization name	
Location Where are you located?	
Legal status Non-profit society? Registered society? Charitable status?	
Start date Date your organization began operations	
Mission Your organization's mission statement	
Programs What programs does your organization offer?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Target population What groups of people do your organization's programs serve?	

Major accomplishments List your organization's major accomplishments related to this proposal.	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Personnel Who makes up your organization? (board of directors, number of employees, volunteers, etc.)	
Link to Need Statement Include a statement or two about the need the proposed project will meet. (See section below.)	

The Need Statement is a thorough explanation of the need or problem in the organization or community that the proposal attempts to address. It is based on research findings, demographic data, and other sources of reliable information.

The Need Statement shows the funder the applicant's knowledge of the current situation and explains why the proposed project is important. In addition to showing that you understand all aspects of the problem, it helps your organization tie its concern to the funder's mandate or mission.

TIP

The Need Statement is key to the proposal, justifying the proposal by clearly identifying the concern and cause requiring attention in your community.

Many organizations regularly conduct a needs assessment for their community. This can be a great source of information for your Need Statement.

The Need Statement should accomplish the following tasks:

- ❖ identify and describe the need you seek to address
- ❖ describe the causes of the problem and the circumstances creating the need
- ❖ identify approaches or solutions to date, if any (You may want to include past programs that addressed this need.)
- ❖ demonstrate that you have a thorough understanding of the need
- ❖ demonstrate that this is the same need that the funder seeks to address
- ❖ demonstrate that your program intervention is the best possible solution

The Need Statement should answer the question, "What is the need in your community that your project is going to address?" In answering this question, there are a few things you might want to consider:

❖ Does the need addressed in your proposal have some clear relationship to your organization's mission? If you went through the steps in developing your proposal, you should be able to answer this question with a "Yes!"
❖ The Need Statement should focus on community need rather than on the needs of your organization.
❖ The Need Statement should be supported by evidence. Do you have statistics and facts to show this need is genuine?
❖ The Need Statement should be consistent with your organization's ability to address the need.
❖ The Need Statement should be clear and easy to read, without slang or jargon.
❖ If you think this project could be a model for others, you could include in your Need Statement that it addresses a need on a larger scale.

TIP

Use statistics, not assumptions, for evidence. Make sure the statistics you use are clear and support your argument. Statistics that compare one item to another (comparative statistics) work best to support your Need Statement.

AVOIDING A COMMON MISTAKE

When writing about what causes the perceived community need or problem, one of the most common mistakes in proposals is to fall into a pattern of "circular reasoning". It is circular reasoning to argue that the problem is the lack of the project, service, or program that one is proposing.

For example, consider this need statement, "The problem facing many teens is that there is no community centre. Therefore, we need a new community centre."

This statement fails to identify the needs teens have that could be met through a community centre. To avoid this error in thinking, keep asking the

question "Why do we need X?" The factors you list as contributing to the problem should connect with your proposed objectives and plans.

Keep in mind as you write that the way you define the cause of the problem will reflect the way you try to solve it. Therefore, for the example above, you must ask yourself "Why do we need a community centre?" You are seeking to answer the question, "What are the factors that cause the need?" The "need" for a community centre may be linked to any of several causes, but not all will be reasonable:

- ❖ Lack of space for programming—This might be a likely reason for a new centre.
- ❖ Impact of colonization—This is probably too general a problem to connect with a need for a new community centre.
- ❖ Lack of teen activities—This may be the case, but is a new centre the only (or the best) option or remedy?
- ❖ Abuse of alcohol and drugs—How would a new centre change this?
- ❖ High incidence of teen pregnancy—Is this truly a problem? Perhaps the real need is for motherhood training or for more family support. How would a new centre help?
- ❖ Poverty—Perhaps general poverty in the community would be a good reason for a new centre if, for example, the community has no other facility, or as a source of community pride.

FINDING THE DATA (DEMONSTRATING THE NEED)

The use of data provides documentation for the problem. The nature of the need and factors contributing to it should come from the data. The data itself can come from a broad variety of sources such as

- ❖ statistics from government and other reputable agencies;
- ❖ reports and documents prepared by government sources;
- ❖ reports prepared by foundations, community groups, and other non-profit organizations and agencies;
- ❖ program data such as evaluation results, client intake information, client and staff surveys, waiting lists, and service records;
- ❖ journals, periodicals, newspapers, and books;
- ❖ interviews with professionals in the field;
- ❖ quotes from organization directors and community leaders;
- ❖ feasibility studies or needs assessments.

TYPES OF USEFUL DATA

Data collection categories that may be useful in writing need statements include:

- ❖ data on the extent of the need (whether the need has increased, decreased, or remains the same) and clients' current physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, social, and/or economic status;
- ❖ data indicating the factors contributing to or causing the problem, and data on related problems;
- ❖ data comparing the need in your target area with that in other communities;
- ❖ data on the short- and long-term consequences of no intervention (social costs as well as cost-benefit analysis if possible);
- ❖ data on the activities and results of other organizations responding to the same or a similar need;
- ❖ data from experts in the field, including research studies and evaluation results.

TIP

If data does not exist at your community level, it is acceptable to use provincial or national data from similar communities.

The development of appropriate data collection techniques may be used as one of the proposal objectives.

STATEMENT OF NEED WORKSHEET

Who? Who is your target population? Who are in need of the program or service you want to offer?	
What? What exactly are the issues facing the target population?	
Where? Where are the people with the need? (e.g., on reserve, off reserve, etc.?)	
When? When is this need evident?	

Why? Why does this need occur?	
What if? What are the consequences of addressing and not addressing this need?	
How? How is your organization best suited to address this need?	
Evidence What data and information do you have to support this claim?	

The Project Description section of a proposal consists of three main parts, each with different aims:

1. *Goals and Objectives* identifies the results or benefits expected from the project, service, or program.
2. *Project Activities* (also referred to as the Action Plan, Methods, Work Plan, or Implementation Strategy) gives a detailed account of the activities designed to accomplish the results.
3. *Evaluation Plan* explains the criteria and methods used for assessing the results. (See section, p. 34.)

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A goal is the main reason or purpose for an activity. It is a vision of something to be achieved. Think of it as the big picture. For example, a goal would be to improve the lives of teens in our community. Most projects are based on one, two, or at the most, three goals.

Goals are not the same thing as objectives. Objectives follow goals and are activities that are undertaken to achieve a goal.

TIP

To identify the goals of your proposal, return to the Need Statement and state the major reasons for your work. The following questions will help:

- ❖ **What will be the ideal outcome if we eliminate, prevent, or improve the situation?**
- ❖ **What population will you target (Elders, youth, new moms, etc.)?**
- ❖ **What overall, long-term situation do you desire for your target population?**
- ❖ **What type of change do you want to make?**
- ❖ **What time frame is needed to achieve this level of change?**

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

Objectives are the small picture. They specify steps and actions needed to reach your goals. While goals are usually longer term, objectives can be very focused and short term. There can be many objectives attached to one goal. Objectives seek a change in behaviour, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs, knowledge, or conditions.

Well-stated objectives provide the following information:

❖ a target population of the service or study
❖ the number of clients to be reached
❖ a time frame for the service or study
❖ the expected measurable results or benefits

In our example of the goal of improving the lives of teens in our community, the objectives might be to

❖ *increase the number of activities for youth,*
❖ *increase the space for youth programming,*
❖ *reduce the number of teen pregnancies,*
❖ *reduce the number of teens abusing drugs and alcohol.*

Your Goals and Objectives section should tie directly to your Need Statement. If your goals and objectives do not relate to your Need Statement, the funding agency may not look favourably on your proposal because they get the impression that you lack a thorough understanding of the problem. The manner in which the objective is presented will determine the type of evaluation to be conducted. (See the evaluation section below.)

TIP

For Objectives, use action verbs (e.g., "to reduce", "to increase") rather than passive verbs (e.g., "to be reduced", "to be increased") to indicate the expected change you hope the project will create (see p. 49 below).

Allow plenty of time for your objectives to be reached, as it usually takes longer than planned.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES WORKSHEET

Use a separate sheet for each goal of your proposed project. Try to limit the number of objectives for each goal to make sure your goal is manageable.

GOAL NO. __: _____

Component	1	2	3
Objectives			
Key issues you are seeking to change			

Target population			
Direction of change (e.g., to reduce, to increase, to decrease, to expand)			
Time frame			

The Project Activities section provides a clear account of what you plan to do, why you have chosen that particular approach, who will complete tasks, and in what time frame the tasks will be completed. This section builds on the objectives, explaining how you will reach each one. This section should be clear in describing your methods and why you chose those methods.

PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES

Reflecting on the projects, services, or programs you propose to deliver, begin by listing the activities necessary to get the project underway. It is useful to identify the person responsible for performing each activity and to estimate the time needed to complete it. While activities will vary depending on the project, examples may include

- ❖ staffing plans,
- ❖ site/facility selection,
- ❖ special equipment needs,
- ❖ agreements and collaboration plans with other organizations,
- ❖ community involvement plans,
- ❖ outreach to target population.

IMPLEMENTATION ACTIVITIES

These activities relate to the service delivery process and the specific approaches to the target population you will use to accomplish the objectives. In general, health and human service programming can be grouped into three main categories: training or education, support services, and provision of resources. Depending on your project, the following are some of the common questions useful in developing your implementation strategy:

- ❖ *Training or Education* (e.g., workshops, preparatory training, family life education, prevention campaigns, posters, training manuals)

  - ➢ Who is the target population?
  - ➢ What are the training or education objectives? (What will people learn?)
  - ➢ What will be the learning content, format, and schedule?
  - ➢ How will it be developed; who is responsible?
  - ➢ What strategies/techniques (including teaching aids and tools) will you use?

➢ Who will conduct the training?
➢ How will you distribute materials (e.g., if manuals, newsletters, and/or videos are used rather than workshops)?

❖ *Support Services* (e.g., counselling, support groups, crisis intervention)

➢ What support services will be in place?
➢ What underlying assumptions or evidence support this choice?
➢ What will be the support service process, format, and timeline?
➢ What issues and content will the support services address?
➢ Who will be included (e.g., support systems, professionals) and what will their role be?

❖ *Provision of Resources* (e.g., transportation, meals programs, recreation programs, health-care screening, counselling)

➢ Who is your target population?
➢ What resources will your organization provide?
➢ Who will develop, organize, and deliver the resources?
➢ When and how will the resources be delivered?
➢ Will any special equipment be needed? How will it be obtained?

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

It is often useful to include job descriptions for all key positions. They should provide information on the major responsibilities and tasks of the position. Examples of job descriptions can be found on websites such as www.workpolis.com, www.monsterjobs.ca, and www.bcjobs.ca.

A job description typically includes

❖ definition of the position,
❖ reporting structure,
❖ major responsibilities and related tasks,
❖ knowledge and skills required,
❖ training and experience requirements.

METHODS

In the previous section, you made sure that there was a strong connection between the Need Statement and the Goals and Objectives. Now it is important to link the activities/methods directly to them. Continuity between these sections will result in a proposal that is clear and well-organized.

It is a good idea to explain *why* you chose a particular method to meet your stated community needs. The funding agency reviewers might be aware of other methods, so you will want to justify why the method you chose will be the most effective.

Key Questions to Consider

After you have written your Goals and Objectives, and Methods sections, you might want to ask yourself some review questions to make sure your Methods section is complete. If you can answer "yes" to each of these questions, then your methods section should be complete.

☐ Do your methods and objectives flow from the Need Statement and Goals and Objectives?

☐ Do your methods explain the specific activities to be undertaken?

☐ Have you explained why you selected specific methods or activities?

☐ Have you explained the timing and order of specific activities?

☐ Is it clear who will perform the specific activities?

☐ Given the projected resources (including staffing), are the proposed activities possible and realistic?

METHODS WORKSHEET

OBJECTIVE 1:

_____

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

OBJECTIVE 2:

_____

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

OBJECTIVE 3:

_____

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

PURPOSE AND CONTENT

The evaluation is an important component of the proposal. It enables the funder to determine how you will measure your progress in meeting the objectives. For your own benefit, a sound evaluation clarifies objectives so they are measurable. The funder will be able to see your success, and you will learn in the process. Evaluation will enable you to refine approaches to service delivery.

Organizations often conduct evaluations in order to do six things:

- ❖ find out whether the program did what was expected
- ❖ determine whether the methods specified were used and whether the objectives were met
- ❖ determine whether the project made an impact on the community need identified
- ❖ obtain feedback from the target population and others
- ❖ maintain control over the project
- ❖ make adjustments to strengthen what is working during the program and address what is not

Your organization might already have an evaluation process in place for other programs. Funders often provide guidelines on the evaluation tool expected. You can adapt these evaluation processes for your project. Read the Request for Proposals or application instructions to determine the nature of the evaluation they want.

A typical evaluation may include such topics as

- ❖ number of clients served;
- ❖ demographic profile of clients;
- ❖ length of client involvement;
- ❖ level of client satisfaction (community or client views on the service)
- ❖ materials created or distributed;
- ❖ client demand for service;
- ❖ changes in client behaviour, attitude, knowledge, or condition;
- ❖ staff views on the service;
- ❖ number of graduates.

Some typical sources for evaluation data include

- ❖ organization records;
- ❖ progress reports;
- ❖ agenda and meeting minutes;
- ❖ activity schedules;
- ❖ visitor logs;
- ❖ questionnaires, interview notes, and client survey forms;
- ❖ standardized tests;
- ❖ staff notes and documentation of observations;
- ❖ client intake/exit interviews.

Key Questions to Consider

After you have completed your evaluation section, you might want to ask yourself the following questions to determine whether your section is complete. If you can answer, "Yes" to these questions, you should have a complete evaluation section.

☐ Does your evaluation section focus on assessing the projected results?

☐ Does your evaluation assess the efficiency of program methods?

☐ Does your evaluation section describe who will be evaluated and/or what will be measured?

☐ Does your evaluation section state what information will be collected in the evaluation process?

☐ Does the evaluation section state who will be responsible for making the assessments?

☐ Does the evaluation section discuss how the information and conclusions will be used to improve the program?

TIP

Ask a co-worker to read over the proposal sections and verify that the checklists are complete. This will help to prevent missing information, sections or questions that might have been overlooked, and spelling mistakes.

EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

1. What questions will your project evaluation try to answer?
2. What are your specific evaluation plans; what is your time frame?
3. What kind of data will you collect as a part of the evaluation process?
4. How often will you be collecting data for the evaluation?
5. How will you collect the data? (What methods will you use?)

6. Are you making comparisons in the data collection?
7. If you are using a participant survey, how will you decide who to survey?
8. Who is responsible for the evaluation of the program?
9. Who will receive the evaluation reports?

Government funding agencies generally require considerable detail and provide instructions and budget forms that you must use. Foundations and corporations typically require less detail, but they still rely on the budget to help them evaluate the merit of the proposal. Be sure to follow a format or form for the proposal budget if the funder specifies one. Make sure you understand what the funder is and is not willing to fund. For example, some funders will not fund capital expenses. The best budgets "translate" the Methods section of the proposal into dollars.

If you are seeking funds from more than one agency, it is generally a good idea to let each funder know you are doing so. As well, some funders may be more comfortable awarding you a grant if they know others have already recognized the merit of your project.

A budget may include

* ❖ proposed budget—income and expenses associated with your proposed project, services, or program;
* ❖ organization budget—income and expenses for your whole organization. This might be necessary if you are seeking general operating funds;
* ❖ budget detail and justification—line-by-line details of your project budget;
* ❖ in-kind contributions—expected donations (goods and/or services) that will be used on your proposed project. These are discussed in detail below.

LINE-ITEM BUDGET

The most common budget format for listing expenditures in the health and social fields is a line-item budget. In general, costs for a project are divided into two main budget categories: personnel costs and operating expenses. Personnel costs include the salaries and benefits of the staff required to complete the project. Personnel costs may also include consultants and other professionals, such as Elder advisors. Operating expenses include expenditures such as rent, printing, travel, telephone, honorariums, administration, and supplies.

Sample Budget

Staffing

Coordinator	45,000.00	
Benefits (16%)	7,200.00	
Subtotal		52,200.00

Operations

Travel	5,000.00	
Meals/ Gatherings	4,800.00	
Supplies	4,000.00	
Equipment	8,000.00	
Honorariums	5,000.00	
Translator	5,000.00	
*Administration (10%)	8,400.00	
Subtotal		40,200.00
Total		92,400.00

*The general guideline is to include 10% of the overall project cost for your administration budget line item.

TIP

Make sure to read the grant carefully, as some grants specify the maximum amount you can devote to administration, while others do not grant any funding for administration.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTIONS

It is common for funders to require the organization to cover a portion of the costs. This is typically referred to as an in-kind contribution. An in-kind contribution can be a financial contribution, but most often it is services provided by the organization. This could include staff time, office space, computers, printing, etc. used in the project but not paid out of the proposal budget.

Note: There are two important reasons for including in-kind contributions in your budget: it gives the funder an accurate picture of the overall project costs, and it shows community support.

Sample In-Kind Budget

Category	Funder	In-Kind
Staffing		
Coordinator	45,000.00	
Benefits (16%)	7,200.00	
Admin. support		3,000.00
Subtotal	52,200.00	3,000.00
Operations		
Travel	5,000.00	
Meals/Gatherings	4,800.00	
Supplies	4,000.00	
Office space		4,800.00
Phone		600.00
Equipment	8,000.00	
Honorariums	5,000.00	
Translator	5,000.00	
Administration (10%)	8,400.00	
Subtotal	40,200.00	5,400.00
Total	92,400.00	8,400.00
Total Budget	92,400.00	

In this example, administrative support was determined by the worker providing 10% (0.5 days per week) of their time to the project at a yearly salary rate of $30,000. The office space for a one-year project was included as $400 per month and the phone calculated as $50 per month. These figures will vary among organizations. Information such as this can be included in a budget justification page.

TIP

Check over the proposed budget to make sure it corresponds to the Methods section. The budget should not raise any concerns with the funding agency's guidelines and eligible expenses.

Key Questions to Consider
Here are some questions you may want to ask after you have completed your budget section:

☐ Is the budget consistent with the proposal's program and methods?

☐ Is there a note in the budget explaining the items that may not be immediately clear?

☐ Does the budget include in-kind contributions?

☐ Does the budget address the question of how overhead costs will be recovered?

☐ Can you achieve the objectives within the proposed budget?

BUDGET WORKSHEET

Item	Funds Required	In-Kind Contributions	Total Budget
Personnel			
Wages			
Benefits			
Consultant/Professional fees			
Honorariums			
Travel			
Supplies/Materials			
Office/Room rentals			
Accommodations			
Meals			
Administration			
TOTAL EXPENSES			

If you have worked through this manual and made sure you have each section of the grant proposal completed, congratulations! You are almost finished and ready to submit your proposal. There are just a few more things you need to consider.

COVER LETTER

A good cover letter is essential. It is the first piece of information about your proposal that will be read by the funding agency. You should try to limit your cover letter to one page. It should include: the specific financial request being made, a brief description of the organization making the request, and assurance of the support of the board of directors or band council.

TIP

Your cover letter is the first thing the grant reviewer will see. Ensure that it is clearly written and organized, and contains all the relevant information to make a good first impression.

APPENDICES

Most funding bodies provide a list of what they want in the appendices. If they do not have a list, it is a good idea to submit at least the following: information about your organization: tax number (for charitable organizations), list of board members, overall budget, brochure and/or most current newsletter, latest annual report, long-range plan, and letters of support.

It is a good idea to keep a current copy of all supporting documents such as audited financial statements, certificates of good standing, and other organizational information in a proposal folder. This way, you will not have to collect this information each time you draft a proposal.

> **TIP**
>
> **The appendices should support your proposal. Therefore, the reader should be directed to them throughout the proposal wherever the background information they contain is relevant.**

FOLLOWING UP WITH FUNDERS

After you have submitted the proposal, telephone the funding agency's contact person to confirm that they received it. During the call, you can also find out when the funding decision will be made if this isn't already stated in the request for proposals.

Since you may have sent more than one proposal for the same project, keep each funder informed of changes in the status of other requests for funds.

Once you have received a grant, your organization should acknowledge it through a formal announcement—perhaps at an annual general assembly, in a press release, or in a bulletin in your newsletter. (This action may depend on the size of the grant, any commitment you made to recognize the funder's contribution, or a specific requirement by the funder.)

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT CHECKLIST

Did you take the following actions?

- ☐ Determine which project ideas have the best chance of being funded

- ☐ Form a planning team (This may include people affected by the project, community leaders (Elders, band councillors, youth, etc.), key staff, volunteers, and other collaborating organizations.)

- ☐ Design a program plan

- ☐ Find agencies that might fund your project

- ☐ Contact the potential funder for more information if necessary

- ☐ Read through the funder's materials to make sure you follow their directions

- ☐ Prepare the proposal components—Need Statement, Goals and Objectives, Methods, Evaluation, and Budget

- ☐ Prepare the final proposal sections—cover letter, summary, and all required appendices

- ☐ Ensure your proposal is clear and well-written by having at least one person not closely involved in the writing review it and give feedback

- ☐ Check the funder deadlines and the number of proposal copies you must submit

- ☐ Keep a copy of the proposal for your records

- ☐ Phone the funder within two weeks after submitting the proposal

REFERENCES

Carlson, Mim. *Winning Grants Step by Step*. Support Centers of America. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995.

Coley, Soraya M.,and Cynthia A. Scheinberg. *Proposal Writing*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, and Stephen J. Silverman. *Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning Dissertations and Grant Proposals*. 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000.

Ruskin, Karen B., and Charles M. Achilles. *Grantwriting, Fundraising, and Partnerships: Strategies that Work!* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 1995.

Here are some common reasons why proposals are rejected by funders:

- ❖ failure to clearly identify and validate a significant issue
- ❖ failure to clearly show how the monies will be spent for project activities
- ❖ failure to clearly describe the nature of the problem
- ❖ failure to involve the community in the planning process
- ❖ failure to adequately document the problem
- ❖ failure to present a clear plan for evaluating the program
- ❖ failure to describe the objectives in steps that are clearly measurable
- ❖ proposing an unreasonable time schedule
- ❖ proposing an inappropriate method of addressing the problem
- ❖ proposing to work in an area in which the organization has no experience
- ❖ proposing to confront a problem that is too complex to be handled within the funding boundaries
- ❖ poorly organized and poorly written

You may have a great idea for a project, service, or program that meets a real need in your community. However, to inspire the people who might fund your project, you must be able to convince them that your idea is indeed brilliant. Many people with great ideas do not have the skill and training to do this.

Here are some key points to keep in mind:

- ❖ Aim for clarity in your writing. Complex sentences and jargon make writing difficult to understand.
- ❖ Keep in mind that technical terms or abbreviations might be known to you but not necessarily to your reader/reviewer.
- ❖ Try to use gender-neutral terms. The easiest way to do this is to use a plural.
    For example:
    Best—"Good *teachers* learn from *their* students." or "*A* good teacher learns from *the* students."
    Acceptable (when your proposal is directed at one gender)— "The *woman* forgot *her* handbag."
    Acceptable (only when there is no alternative)—"A good teacher learns from *their* students."
    Acceptable (only if used rarely and after all alternatives have been considered)—"A good teacher learns from *his or her* students."
    Unacceptable—"A good teacher learns from *his* students."
- ❖ Avoid contractions. (E.g., use "is not" rather than "isn't".)
- ❖ Avoid slang and informal expressions, e.g., "the Rez", "Indian Country".
- ❖ Avoid one-sentence paragraphs, but also avoid paragraphs in which too many ideas are jumbled together.
- ❖ Use active sentences wherever possible.
- ❖ Edit your proposal carefully.

ACTIVE AND PASSIVE SENTENCES

Here are two basic examples of active and passive sentences:

Active—"The coordinator *will consult* with community members."
Passive—"Community members *will be consulted*."

Active sentences focus on who or what is making things happen. They tell a whole story—someone *does* something, e.g., "The dog bit the boy." They tend to be clearer, more direct, and more concise because they need fewer words to express an action.

Passive sentences focus on who or what is affected by the event or action. Sometimes they avoid completely telling the cause of an action, e.g., "The boy was bitten." Passive sentences contain a form of the verb "to be" ("am, is, was, were, are, been, have, will be, have been, would be, will have been", etc.). The form of "to be" is generally followed by a past-tense verb, e.g., "is watched", "was presented", "will be consulted". Passive sentences tend to be awkward. However, there are some occasions when it is necessary to use them. For example, sometimes the writer wants to achieve a different effect, and sometimes there is simply no choice. However, these occasions are few.

TIP

If you are using a word-processing program, you can set it to alert you anytime you write in the passive voice.

It also will have tools that check spelling and grammar (but note the caution in the editing checklist below).

EDITING

It is very important to edit your proposal. Edit a printed copy—you will often miss errors if you edit only on your computer's screen.

You will often miss errors when you edit your own writing. This is because as the author, you know what you wanted to write, so sometimes you read what you think you wrote rather than what is actually written. Therefore, it is best to have another person edit as well. **Even the best writer needs an editor.**

Reading the proposal out loud also will help you notice errors. Try to read *exactly* what is on the page, not what your mind assumes is there. Have someone else read the proposal aloud to you.

If you are using a computer, use a spell-checker. But be aware that it does not catch every mistake, especially if you put the wrong word in a sentence even though it is spelled correctly (e.g., "two", "to", and "too").

It is always worthwhile to edit your work more than once and for a specific purpose each time you edit. Here are several errors to watch out for:

COMMON WORD USAGE AND PUNCTUATION PROBLEMS

- ❖ "Alot" is not a word. *A lot* of people think that it is.
- ❖ Do not confuse colons (:) and semi-colons (;). Colons indicate a list will follow, whereas semicolons are used to join two independent clauses together.
- ❖ Avoid run-on sentences. These are made by inappropriately joining two complete sentences.
- ❖ Do not confuse "i.e." ("in other words") and "e.g." ("for example").
- ❖ Do not confuse "affect" and "effect". Affect means to cause an effect on something. The effect is produced by a cause. E.g., "This project will *affect* a number of homeless people." "The *effect* of this program will be that there will be fewer homeless people."
- ❖ Do not confuse "it's" with "its". "It's" is the contraction of "it is". "Its" is the possessive of "it". The best way to avoid this confusion is never to use contractions.

EDITING SUMMARY

Some of these editing tips may seem overly concerned with details. However, one way or another, the style and presentation of your proposal will make an impression on the funder. What that is, is up to you. If your proposal is well written, the funder will have a sense that you and your organization are well organized and have a capable staff.

Editing Checklist

Edit for argument
- ☐ Are your main points or arguments logically and clearly presented?
- ☐ Are your facts complete and correct?

Edit for organization
- ☐ Does your introduction provide suitable background information?
- ☐ Are your paragraphs well arranged and developed? Do they begin with topic sentences?

Edit for style
- ☐ Is the writing clear and concise?
- ☐ Is your conclusion effective?

Edit for grammatical correctness
- ☐ Run-on sentences and sentence fragments
  - ▪ Have you put two sentences together incorrectly?
  - ▪ Does each sentence have a subject and a verb, and express a complete thought?
- ☐ Omissions
  - ▪ Have you left out any words?
- ☐ Punctuation
  - ▪ Does every sentence end with a period, question mark, etc.?
  - ▪ Have you made proper use of commas?
- ☐ Subject-verb agreement
  - ▪ Check every subject and verb to make sure that if you have used a singular subject, you have also used a singular verb, and if you have used a plural subject, you have used a plural verb.
- ☐ Sentence length
  - ▪ An average sentence is 22 words long. Do you have too many short, choppy sentences? Do you have long, run-on sentences that could be made into two or more sentences?
- ☐ Past, present, and future tenses
  - ▪ Does each sentence use tenses consistently?
  - ▪ Have you used the appropriate verb tense?
- ☐ Capitalization
  - ▪ Have you capitalized names of persons (and offical titles preceding names), cities, countries, streets, and titles?
- ☐ Spelling
  - ▪ Check any words you have doubts about. Use the word processor's spell-checker only to double-check the spelling. If you are unsure about the spelling of a word, look it up. (www.dictionary.com)
  - ▪ Have you removed contractions (e.g., "don't" becomes "do not", etc.)?

EVALUATING YOUR PROPOSAL

Funder Checklist
If you were the person reviewing this proposal, you might apply the following checklist:

Credibility Component
- ☐ Establishes credibility of the organization as a good investment
- ☐ Establishes qualifications of the organization and staff in areas for which funds are requested
- ☐ Indicates who the contact person is and their role in the project

Need Component
- ☐ States a problem of a reasonable size
- ☐ Supports a client need with relevant data
- ☐ Establishes the project/program's current need for funds

Objectives Component
- ☐ Describes measurable results to be achieved
- ☐ Appears possible considering the organization's resources
- ☐ Is achievable within the time frame of the grant

Methods Component
- ☐ Describes how objectives will be achieved
- ☐ Includes staffing, timelines, and client selection
- ☐ Appears cost-effective

Evaluation Component
- ☐ Tells process for evaluating achievement of objectives
- ☐ Tells process for evaluating and modifying methods
- ☐ Tells who will be doing the evaluation
- ☐ Tells how data will be gathered, analyzed, and reported

Budget Component
- ☐ Is complete and accurate
- ☐ Seems sufficient to cover cost of methods and achieve objectives
- ☐ Indicates how funds will be used
- ☐ Provides information on other sources of income
- ☐ Will be balanced with the inclusion of this grant

PROPOSAL IDEA WORKSHEET

❖ Briefly, what is your organization's mission?

❖ What new projects (or improvements to current programs) are you planning for the next 2–3 years?

Project	Title/Description
I	
II	
III	
IV	

❖ Which of the above projects fit with the mission and vision of your organization?
  Note: You will need to strongly justify an application to fund projects that fall outside of your organization's mission and vision.

Project	Fits mission? (Y/N)	Potential problem area(s)
I		
II		
III		
IV		

❖ Are any of these projects currently being done by another organization? Are there possibilities to partner with another organization?
  Note: Many funders like to see partnerships between organizations.

Project	Duplication? Y/N)	Possible partnership? (Y/N) If yes, with whom?
I		
II		
III		
IV		

❖ Do your ideas meet the needs of your community?

Project	Community need
I	
II	
III	
IV	

❖ What data do you have or can you collect to prove that there is a need (e.g., community needs assessment, Aboriginal peoples health survey, government statistics, etc)?

❖ Does your idea have a well-defined target population? What is it?

❖ Does your organization have the capacity to deliver each project, service, or program (e.g., enough staff, training, experience, equipment, etc.)? Briefly describe it.

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❖ Is this a service or program that your community members or target population will want and use? How do you know?

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❖ Does your idea support the future development of your organization?

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❖ Where can you get support for your project (e.g., chief and council, community, board of directors, etc.)?

Project	Possible supporters
I	
II	
III	
IV	

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION WORKSHEET

Organization name	
Location Where are you located?	
Legal status Non-profit society? Registered society? Charitable status?	
Start date Date your organization began operations	
Mission Your organization's mission statement	
Programs What programs does your organization offer?	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Target population What groups of people do your organization's programs serve?	

Major accomplishments List of your organization's major accomplishments related to this proposal	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Personnel Who makes up your organization? (board of directors, number of employees, volunteers, etc.)	
Link to Need Statement Include a statement or two about the need the proposed project will meet. (See section below.)	

STATEMENT OF NEED WORKSHEET

Who? Who is your target population? Who are in need of the program or service you want to offer?	
What? What exactly are the issues facing the target population?	
Where? Where are the people with the need? (e.g., on reserve, off reserve, etc.?)	
When? When is this need evident?	

Why? Why does this need occur?	
What if? What are the consequences of addressing and not addressing this need?	
How? How is your organization best suited to address this need?	
Evidence What data and information do you have to support this claim?	

GOALS AND OBJECTIVE WORKSHEET

Use a separate sheet for each goal of your proposed project. Try to limit the number of objectives for each goal to make sure your goal is manageable.

GOAL NO. __: _____

Component	1	2	3
Objectives			
Key issues you are seeking to change			

Target population			
Direction of change (e.g., to reduce, to increase, to decrease, to expand)			
Time frame			

METHODS WORKSHEET

OBJECTIVE 1:

_____

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

OBJECTIVE 2:

_____

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

OBJECTIVE 3:

Tasks	Resources required	Start and End dates

EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

1. What questions will your project evaluation try to answer?
2. What are your specific evaluation plans; what is your time frame?
3. What kind of data will you collect as a part of the evaluation process?
4. How often will you be collecting data for the evaluation?
5. How will you collect the data? (What methods will you use?)

6. Are you making comparisons in the data collection?
7. If you are using a participant survey, how will you decide who to survey?
8. Who is responsible for the evaluation of the program?
9. Who will receive the evaluation reports?

BUDGET WORKSHEET

Item	Funds Required	In-Kind Contributions	Total Budget
Personnel			
Wages			
Benefits			
Consultant/Professional fees			
Honorariums			
Travel			
Supplies/Materials			
Office/Room rentals			
Accommodations			
Meals			
Administration			
TOTAL EXPENSES			

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