

PROPOSALS

Proposals are written in a variety of informal and formal modes, from short memoranda to long multi-volume documents.

An in-house proposal, written as a brief and informal memorandum, may circulate only within a writer's organization.

An external proposal may circulate widely and be refereed by management and budget experts as well as by knowledgeable technical experts.

Business plans (another type of proposal), are written to acquire funding for a project through a bank or through private investors.

Finally, grants or grant-making documents are written to acquire funding for a project from a foundation or other grant-funding organization.

ELEMENTS

Identify a problem (or the potential need)

Explain what work will be done to solve the problem.

Name who will do the work

Argue for their qualifications

Specify a time frame, location, materials, and equipment

Calculate a cost

COMPONENTS

1. COPY OF THE REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP) [if applicable]

Include a copy of the RFP.

2. LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL OR COVER LETTER

Express your appreciation for the opportunity to submit your proposal, and offer any assistance in clarifying information.

3. COVERSHEET

Use a coversheet, especially if provided.

4. PROJECT SUMMARY

The project summary provides an overview of the proposal. Provide all of the major information in summary form. Some readers/reviewers will only read the project summary and not the entire proposal, so consider this component one of the most important of the entire document.

5. TABLE OF CONTENTS

The table of content will help readers to locate material. Make sure to include Headings + Page Numbers in the table of contents and throughout your document.

6. LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

List all figures and table titles and their page numbers.

7. COMPLIANCE MATRIX/MATRICES

A compliance matrix is a section of the proposal which indicates that you have paid careful attention to the sponsor's requirements or their Call for Proposals, also referred to as an RFP (or Request for Proposal). Compliance Matrices tell reviewers of proposals where they can find your response to each required sections/questions/requested information.

8. THE PROPOSAL

A. Introduction

Provide all of the information needed for the reader to understand what you plan to do. Include all of the information relevant to: What are you doing? How do you plan to do it? What do you need to do the project? Why are you doing it?

B. Product/Service Description (optional)

If your successful proposal will result in offering projects or services, then include a general description of the projects and any specifications (artifacts) you have in mind. *Include all of the information relevant to: What is it? What is the finished product?*

C. Management Section

This section shows how long tasks will take and how long you plan to spend on the project. Using a timeline or a Gantt chart may be helpful, sometimes even required. *Include all of the information relevant to: How long will this project take to accomplish?*

D. Background Section

Background sections are the place to show the qualifications of the principal investigators and their associates. Resumes must be provided and sometimes summarized. *Include all of the information relevant to: Who is doing the work? Who is in-charge of the project?*

E. Cost Analysis/Budget

In this section, provide cost details and justify each request. *Include all of the information relevant to: How much will this cost? Do you have any money already? What are you asking for with the proposal?*

F. Appendixes

Include any documents which help to show financial need or which help the reader to better comprehend the project.

G. References

List any references referred to in the proposal.

SUGGESTIONS

Analyze the audience (even their corporate language – mirror it in your own writing)

Support everything

Define your terms

Prepare an attractive document package

Start with a storyboard

Keep in-mind the form and organization above (it is pretty uniform, and sponsors appreciate the forms)

Use visuals when possible
Keep international readability in mind (avoid colloquialisms)
Narrative or Not!

GRANTS

A specific type of proposal is a grant-proposal. Grant proposals are used to find particular funding for projects (scientific, artistic, industrial, and educational).

Many government agencies solicit research and grant proposals. These granting agencies usually have their own requirements form format and content.

By tailoring your proposal to their needs, you take the first step towards preparing your grant. This aside, the major different in the information reported falls in the category of budget.

In a grant you are expected to list all “in-kind” materials. These are things which you already own or people who work for free (or are expected to work for free). These are volunteers and others not expecting payment from the money received. “In-Kind” also represents all of the equipment that you already possess.

For example if you own a laboratory or an office space, you calculate what you own and put this into the budget under In-Kind.

EX:

Budget

Requested:

Office Space	\$550.00/Month
Office Materials	\$300.00
Office Computers	\$3000.00

In-Kind Materials:

Office Staff (Paid)	\$60,000
Office Staff (Volunteer)	\$60,000
Transportation (2 Dodge Vans)	\$50,000

Oftentimes, grant-making bodies will grant funds only if they are equivalent to what you already have... We call this “possessing matching funds.” Note: you can count almost anything as “In-Kind” if you possess it (kitchen sinks, dogs and cats, whatever is deemed useful and necessary to your plan/project...).