Grant writing 101: Developing winning proposals

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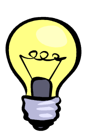
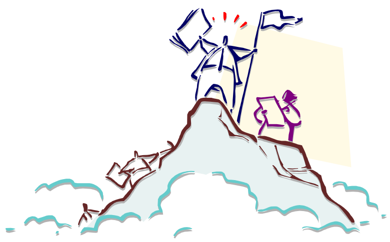


First step: Don't think about the money; think about your goals. You want to match your goals to a funding agency's goals. Then you can work together to achieve.



I. Be careful what you wish for

- If you get the grant, you have to do the work.
- Be realistic about what you can and want to do (or what your organization and colleagues can and want to do).
- Go for grants that help you fund what you are already planning to do.

II. Basic Terminology

A. Grants, Contracts, Cooperative Agreements, Gifts

1. Grant

- Purpose is to transfer money, property, services, or anything of value to recipient in order to accomplish a public purpose.
- No substantial involvement is anticipated between sponsor and recipient during performance of activity.
- An "assistance mechanism" (help: not total payment)

2. Contract

- Principal purpose is to acquire property or services for direct benefit or use of the sponsor.
- Substantial involvement is anticipated between sponsor and recipient during performance of activity.

3. Cooperative agreement

- Principal purpose is to transfer funds to recipient to accomplish a public purpose
- Substantial involvement is anticipated between sponsor and recipient during performance of activity

4. Gift

- Irrevocable funding to support an activity without contractual requirements.

B. Solicited vs. Unsolicited

1. Solicited

An organization (private/public foundation, state/federal agency, etc…) has solicited proposals when it sends out an announcement of a grant/contract/cooperative agreement program and invites other organizations/individuals to submit proposals.

a. Common Solicitations

- RFA: request for applications (grant)
- RFP: request for proposals (contract –usually)
- RFQ: request for quotation (contract)
- PA: program announcement (grant)
- BAA: broad agency announcement
- NOFA: Notice of Funding Availability (grant)

b. Response to solicitation: your proposal (application, proposal, quote, bid, etc.)
Usually includes the following (as outlined in the application request/solicitation):

- Scope of work
- Work plan, methodology, aims
- Key personnel
- Resources
- Budget
- Budget justification

2. Unsolicited

Even if an organization has not solicited proposals, it might accept and fund projects based on an unsolicited proposal.

a. Common unsolicited agreements:

- Gifts
- Grants

b. You initiate the contact.
Many agencies accept unsolicited proposals. Depending on the agency, unsolicited proposals range from lengthy full-proposals, using agency-specific forms, to short letter proposals, which consist of 2-4 pages and are also called letters of inquiry.

III. Locating funding sources & programs

Search hint: don't just look for funding for libraries. Look for funding based on the programs you want to create and patrons you want to serve. Potential keywords: literacy, informal education, community initiatives, arts and culture, and seniors.

A. Where to go for funding sources and programs:

1. State funding

- Kansas Arts Commission
  http://arts.state.ks.us/programs05.html

- Kansas Humanities Council
  http://www.kansashumanities.org/grants/

- Kansas Department of Commerce
  http://kdoch.state.ks.us/public/resources/nonprofits/list.jsp

- Kansas Health Foundation
  http://www.kansashealth.org/grants/

- Kansas Department of Health and Environment
  http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/

- Kansas Grants Clearinghouse
  http://www.kansasgrants.org/

2. Federal funding

- IMLS: Institute of Museum and Library Services
  http://www.imls.gov/grants/index.htm

- National Network of Libraries of Medicine
  http://nnlm.gov/projects/funding/

- USDA (for rural areas-rural development grant great for partnerships)
  http://www.usda.gov/

- Grants.gov: all federal grants
  http://www.grants.gov/

3. Other Databases & Web sites

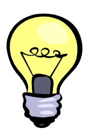
- Foundation Center
  http://www.fdncenter.org
  Even if you can't afford the Foundation Center's fee-based products, they provide a great deal of free information on-line. Their Foundation Finder includes private and corporate foundation information, such as contact names, addresses, phone numbers, WWW pages, and links to foundations' recent IRS filings. These IRS files contain information on past funded projects, such as amounts funded, geography of funded projects, and project subjects.

  Foundation Center's RFP update
  http://www.fdncenter.org/pnd/rfp/index.html
  After signing up for their list, you'll receive weekly updates on new grants.

  FC Search (fee-based)
  http://www.fconline.fdncenter.org/
  The database features a comprehensive listing of active U.S. foundations and corporate giving programs and their associated grants.

- ALA
  http://www.ala.org/Template.cfm?Section=awards

- E-Civis (fee-based)
  http://www.ecivis.com/
  A database of funding opportunities for county and city government agencies. Includes an e-mail alert service and extensive reviews of RFAs/NOFAs.



And as always: a Google Search for "grants for libraries" will bring up a lot of state library association pages with good lists of funding opportunities.

C. What to look for in funding sources and programs:

1. Private vs public funds

2. RFPs, RFAs, PAs, unsolicited, and more

3. Funding opportunity constraints

When you're searching for funding opportunities, check to ensure you, your institution and your idea all match the goals/funding program of the sponsor. Think: person, place & thing

- Person: Are you the right person for the opportunity? Often agencies or specific PAs will restrict their grants to underrepresented minorities, or to Ph.D.s, or other personal/professional qualifications.

- Place: Are you in the right place for the opportunity? Some agencies only fund educational agencies; some agencies will not fund county or city governments. Some agencies will not fund individuals. Some only want to fund in a specific state, or, for industries, in a specific location where the majority of their employees live. Some agencies only fund 503(c) organizations, which a library may or may not be (may route through Friends group).

- Thing: Is your idea conducive with the goals of the agency? Are the things you need to implement your idea covered by the agency? For example: if you want to buy equipment for your idea, does the agency fund equipment? Does the agency normally fund projects in your price range?

4. Finding constraints
To find all the constraints (for and against you, your idea and your place) check multiple sources of agency information. Read everything on their Web site—particularly information about past awards: Who received them? In what organization/state were they located? How much was funded? What was funded?

IV. Analyzing Application Guidelines
Reading and analyzing the proposal solicitation or other proposal guidelines--and using them to prepare the outline and format specifications--is the single most important part of the proposal writing process. It is your first step in writing a responsive proposal and in managing the proposal effort for compliance.

The RFA (request for application) or application guidelines will determine:
- Whether or not you actually qualify and want to submit a proposal
- Technical response and budget
- Proposal format, outline and content
- Proposal themes and sub-themes

A. Read the RFA and/or application guidelines word for word, cover to cover.
Highlight important directions and make a list of question you have as you read the announcement and guidelines. Look for the following:

1. Inconsistencies that need to be cleared up, questions that need to be answered
If you find inconsistencies, e-mail or call the agency and ask for clarification. Often, proposal solicitations include the e-mail addresses of people at the funding agency whom you can contact.

2. The "true" competitiveness of the opportunity Does another institution have the "inside track?" For example, if warning signs are there (surprises, unusual requirements or special requirements), another agency may have the inside track for the funding opportunity. (This is more applicable for contracts rather than grants.)

3. Goal, objectives and statement of work What does the funding agency want?

4. Special contract or grant requirements (including eligibility, cost-sharing, etc…)

5. Is there a bidder's or a grants seeker's conference? If so, you need to go if you want to submit a proposal.

6. What information/signatures/letters will you need from others? Start making your list of information/signatures/letters you'll need—anything that someone else in your organization or outside your organization will need to contribute in order to submit the proposal. Get all this information from others as soon as possible. Ask that letters of support be submitted no later than one week before the final deadline.

If you need or intend to ask for letters of support, offer to provide drafts of the letters for them. The letters shouldn't just say they'll participate or that they support you. If you need real commitments (money, time, etc..) the letters should specifically state what the partners will do.

B. Start a Proposal Binder

Once you know you're going to submit a proposal, place all your proposal materials in a 3-ring binder (including your highlighted copy of the RFA and application guidelines). Keep things organized or you'll regret it when you're trying to find information at the last minute.

C. Create a Proposal Data Sheet

On the data sheet, include all information from the RFA that you need at your fingertips during the proposal development/writing process. This goes in the front of your binder and includes:

- Program solicitation number (or other identification number used by funding agency)
- Exact title of the procurement or funding program (this will become the title, or part of the title of your proposal)
- Name and address of funding agency
- Due date and time of submission (received vs postmark deadline)
- Submission address and instructions (is FedEx ok?)
- Format requirements and font size
- Page limitations and spacing requirements
- Number of required copies
- Special instructions (stapled, not stapled, not bound, etc..)
- Length of contract or grant period and start date
- Expected funding level

- Program Officer name and how she/he can or should be contacted
- Special instructions or requirements you do not want to forget

D. Use the application guidelines to outline and format your proposal.

- Your proposal must be 100% compliant to the application guidelines. Give the funding agency exactly what it asks for in the application guidelines, in exactly the order and manner in which it is requested.

- Follow any format restrictions (type, margins, spacing, etc…) and all application directions to the letter.

- If possible, use the evaluation criteria as your proposal's main headings. If both an evaluation criteria and specific main headings are listed, follow the directed main headings, and work language of the evaluation criteria into your narrative and/or sub-headings.

V. Developing the Conceptual Framework

One key to developing a successful proposal is to "plan backward, implement forward."

Based on the WK Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Process:
http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

Additional information available in: *Measuring the Difference* http://nnlm.gov/evaluation/
(Intended for health information outreach projects but VERY transferrable)

A. Begin with the funding agency's stated goal. Think about how your project will meet that goal (what its **IMPACT** will be). Proposals with a specific, measurable impact are powerful proposals.

Example 1: Agency's stated goal is to "Improve Kansans' awareness of their heritage and history."

- You want to request a new microfilm reader so your patrons will be able to view archived copies of your town's newspaper. How will your project meet the goal stated above? How will you PROVE that the goal has been met?
- IMPACT is a measurable statement at the COMMUNITY level: "Fifty percent community members will report improved awareness of Kansas heritage and history."

"Increasing awareness" may seem like the opposite of a specific, measurable impact, but by the time the planning process is complete you will have a step-by-step guide to how it will happen.

Example 2: Agency's stated goal is to "Increase access to the resources provided by the National Library of Medicine."

- You want to implement the National Library of Medicine's "Information Rx" program in your community. You need funds to cover marketing and promotional costs, the cost of two new computers for patrons to reach the NLM data, and the cost of an assistant to help cover the desk while you are out of the library working on the project. How will your project meet the goal stated above? How will you PROVE that the goal has been met?
- IMPACT is: "Ninety percent of patients referred from health care providers access MedlinePlus for more information, increasing access to National Library of Medicine consumer health resources."

Questions to ask yourself about IMPACT:

- Who benefits from your project?
- Why does this project matter? Why does it matter more than other projects that could be funded?
- In what ways will people, their communities, the environment, etc… benefit from this project?

B. Outcomes

Outcomes are the SPECIFIC BENEFITS your project will provide. The rest of the world calls these "goals" or "objectives," but OUTCOME is a term that really shows the relation between your work and the impact.

- Outcomes should directly relate to your impact in a linear way: Outcome → Impact.
- Every Impact should have at least one Outcome.

NOTE: ALWAYS USE THE TERMS YOUR FUNDING AGENCY REQUESTS.

Example 1: Microfilm Reader
OUTCOMES: 100 people access local paper microform archive in first year.
50 people request microform resources available from KSL.
50 students participate in "Kansas Day" poster session activities.

Example 2: Information Rx Program
OUTCOMES: 100 health care providers are participating in the program after six months.
10 people visit the library each day to fill their "information prescriptions."
Random sample survey indicates community awareness of NLM resources increases by 50%.

Questions to ask yourself about OUTCOMES:

- Does the project address a problem as identified, defined and articulated by the groups the project is supposed to benefit?
- Why is this project of more benefit now than other projects that could be funded?

- Is your project--its activities and results--sustainable?
- If appropriate, how will you ensure that project outcomes continue when outside funding stops?
- How are you institutionalizing activities in your project design?
- Do not forget to consider how your own organization will benefit. Most foundations and funding agencies want to strengthen institutions and build capacity as well as support projects and research.

C. Outputs

OUTPUTS are the actual products your project creates, such as marketing materials, instructional materials, number of classes taught or informational meetings held, etc.

- Outputs should directly relate to your Outcomes in a linear way: Outputs→Outcomes.
- Every Outcome should have at least one Output.

Example 1: Microfilm Reader

OUTPUTS: Three display ads to run in local paper.
Flyers to post in community about availability of resources.
Flyers to post in community about Kansas Day poster session.
Four instructional meetings on how to use the microfilm reader.
One session with person from Historical Society on researching.
Etc., etc.!!!

Example 2: Information Rx

OUTPUTS: Brochures explaining program to health care providers.
Brochures explaining program to health care consumers.
Monthly meetings with health care providers to assess participation.
Community baseline survey assessing awareness of resources.
Community post-project survey assessing awareness of resources.
Four instructional sessions on using MedlinePlus for community.
One instructional session on using MedlinePlus for staff.
Etc., etc!!!

D. Activities

ACTIVITIES are what most people focus on when writing a proposal. It's what you are actually going to DO. However, using this planning process really defines your activities for you, because each must feed into the Outputs, Outcomes, and Impacts.

- ACTIVITIES are often where people go astray, either with too many, too few, or activities that are not clearly related to the purpose of the project.
- Activities should relate directly to your Outputs in a linear way: Activity→Output.
- Every Output will have at least one Activity.
- For more detailed proposals, clearly define EVERY ACTIVITY.
- Developing specific Activities will also help you develop a timeline.

Example 1: Microfilm Reader

ACTIVITIES: Develop criteria for Kansas Day poster session with history teachers.
Promote Kansas Day poster session among students.
Run Kansas Day poster session.
Write article for paper on Kansas Day poster session winner.

Example 2: Information Rx:

ACTIVITIES: Hold focus groups with health care providers to determine effective message for promotional materials.
Write copy for brochure based on focus group input.
Work with marketing to develop brochures.
Test brochures with focus group participants.
Edit brochures based on further input.
Print 5,000 brochures.
Distribute brochures at health care provider meetings.

Questions to ask yourself about ACTIVITES:

- What methods or means will you use to carry out the tasks and sub-tasks? Why have you chosen these methods and means of carrying out your activities?
- What is your schedule of work or project time line? (This can be most detailed in the early months and the first year, and less detailed for succeeding years.)
- What activities will you undertake to solve the problem or address the issue?
- Why are your proposed activities the best way--most effective, cost efficient, most equitable--to solve this problem or address this issue?
- What other potential solutions have you considered? Why did you reject those solutions?
- What will result from your activities?
- What is your plan of work over the life of the proposed project? What will be done and when?
- Can the proposed work be broken down into tasks and sub-tasks? How do the tasks and sub-tasks relate to each other?

E. Resources/Inputs

RESOURCES are what you bring to the table. They can be staff, volunteers, community partners, matching funds, etc. At this point you may realize you do not have the resources necessary to complete the project; you may need to add in an activity/output/outcome series to meet this need (i.e., hiring additional staff or building an outside partnership).

- You should be able to define the Resource for every Activity: who is going to do it? What will they need to do it? Resource→Activity.

F. Translating Your Logic Model into a Proposal:

Resources = Staff, Investigators, Personnel, Interested Parties, Partners
Activities = Activities, Actions, Timeline, Budget, Budget Narrative
Outputs = Deliverables, Timeline, Budget, Budget Narrative
Outcomes = Goals, Objectives, Evaluation
Impact = Goals, Objectives

G. Evaluation

IF YOU BUILD YOUR LOGIC MODEL CORRECTLY, PERFORMANCE EVALUATION IS BUILT INTO YOUR PROPOSAL.

This is a huge benefit of logic models, as evaluation is often the last thing people think of when writing a proposal, but it's one of the most important things to reviewers and funding agencies. Evaluation lets the agency know their money is being used in the way it was intended and is having measurable results.

- Reports write themselves, because you just track your progress through the process.
- DID YOU OR DID YOU NOT MEET THE SPECIFIC MEASURES DEFINED IN THE OUTCOMES?
- Why or why not?
- How can you change to meet the specific measures, or what can you do to expand your success?

VI. Outlining Your Proposal

A. Proposals in response to solicitations or Requests for Applications (RFAs)

Read the guidelines or RFA carefully. It will usually include a required outline that must be followed for your proposal to be considered responsive and technically eligible for review and award. If it does not include a required outline, develop an outline based on the evaluation criteria.

If there are application forms and/or an agency grant proposal guide (in addition to the RFA), read through the forms and proposal guide word for word. Don't glance at the application forms, be sure you have all the information you need to complete the forms.

Pay close attention to editorial and format requirements. Many funders have strict requirements for such things as numbers of pages, type and font size, line spacing, margins, one-sided or two-sided copying, requirements for annex material, how to present budget information and what costs can be included. Work out a careful writing, reviewing, rewriting, and mailing schedule to allow time to meet your deadline.

B. Unsolicited proposals

If your proposal is unsolicited, determine if your potential funder (foundation, organization, donor or government agency) has established proposal procedures, formats, outlines and application forms. Some do and some do not.

C. Electronic submissions
A number of federal and some private foundations are moving from printed proposal submissions to electronic proposal submissions. These electronic proposal systems often have bugs that are yet to be worked out, or can add new, unexpected delays to the proposal submission processes. If submitting electronically, give yourself even more time to understand their system and to ensure you have all the necessary administrators involved.

D. General proposal outline
If no guidelines are available and no requirements are specified, you may wish to use and adapt the format given below. Even if guidelines are provided, you may wish to augment them with some of these elements (with the funding agency permits them).

1. Cover Letter
- Generally, not longer than 1 page
- Addressed to a specific person--usually the contact person listed in the application guidelines
- Describes one key feature and one key benefit of your proposed project or research
- Assures that principle investigator and project staff will be given all necessary resources to accomplish objectives of proposal
- Is signed by the highest authority, as appropriate, within your institution
- Examples of cover letters: http://fdncenter.org/learn/faqs/html/coverletter.html

2. Title page
- Title of proposal (use the title given by the funding agency)
- Name and address of organization submitting proposal
- Name and address of agency to whom proposal is being submitted
- Date of submission

3. Table of Contents and List of Illustrations Provide this even if they don't ask for it—just ask if it's ok. Your reviewers will thank you for it.

4. Introduction and Background
- Keep this section brief--a suggested limit of 3-5 pages
- Describe the problem or issue your project addresses, its significance and who will benefit
- Outline your project's purpose, goal and objectives
- Summarize your proposed activities
- Briefly describe your organization and the qualifications of the project manager
- Include a "road map" to the rest of the proposal

5. Project plan or statement of work This section is the "meat" of your proposal. It should discuss in detail:
- What you are going to do
- How you are going to do it
- Why you are going to do it the way you propose (rationale)
- Describe your monitoring and evaluation plan and information dissemination plan

- Potential problems and constraints you may encounter and your plan for overcoming them
- Include a project schedule or time line

6. Project management This section discusses the roles, responsibilities and qualifications of project staff and others. Include the following:
- Brief, one-paragraph bios of the key personnel
- Resumes for key personnel (usually in an appendix, but referenced here)
- Organizational charts and staffing schedules

7. Organizational capabilities and past experience This section is your organization's "resume."
- Describe special facilities that your organization offers which are applicable to the project or research
- Describe previous projects you or members of your organization have conducted that are relevant to this project and that show you have the expertise and experience to conduct the proposed work

8. Budget and cost proposal
Read the guidelines carefully to determine if the sponsor excludes certain cost categories. Additionally, use the information found in the sponsor's past-awards. What is the sponsor's normal funding range? What and how much does the agency normally fund? Principal budget categories in most proposals include:

a. Direct costs—Don't skimp! Be realistic!
- Salaries and wages of project staff
- Fringe benefits
- Travel, transportation and per diem
- Equipment
- Supplies
- Subcontracts and consultant fees
- Other

b. Facilities & Administration (F&A), also called Indirect costs These costs are necessary at universities and research institutions, but aren't as applicable to public libraries or other organizations.

c. Budget justification This narrative justifies why the costs are necessary for the project and provides detailed explanations as to how you arrived at the costs you're requesting. Be as specific as possible. The more detail you can provide in your budget justification, the more it demonstrates to your reviewers that you have thought through the project and you know what you're doing. Your funder may require other elements in your cost proposal or budget. Examples include:
- Evidence of financial responsibility
- Adequate financial resources statement or yearly operating budget
- IRS nonprofit determination letter (IRS 501(c)3 designation letter)
- Detailed breakdown of fringe benefits

Don't skimp on your budget. Be realistic, but err on the side of a healthy budget—not a frugal one. A chubby budget might get cut, but it won't keep you from getting the grant. But, a skinny budget might tell your reviewers that you don't really know what you're doing. Don't act like a pauper. Act like a princess.

Many funding agencies require or encourage cost-sharing, but many will allow in-kind cost-sharing. Your personnel costs (including fringe benefits) will add up quickly, and usually labor alone will provide ample cost-sharing for most library proposals.

Use a spreadsheet to calculate your budget. You'll need to play with your numbers, particularly if you're trying to fit your budget under a funding cap. There are too many possibilities for err if you don't use a spreadsheet. Remember, you're asking for money—you need to give the impression that you're good with numbers.

VIII. Required icing: tables, charts, & other visual information
Tables and figures, if well designed, can present information efficiently and easily. A reviewer who has 20 proposals to review will be more likely to glance at a graph than he/she is to read an entire proposal. **Anything that is vital to understanding your project ought to be in both graphic and text form.** Use tables and graphics to persuade your reviewers and to make their jobs easier.

Examples of tables and images commonly included in proposals:

- Tables and charts that demonstrate need
- Gantt chart or other project timeline
- Work breakdown structure
- Staffing schedule (staffing plotted against time line)
- Institutional and project organization charts
- Proposal index to evaluation criteria chart
- Before and after solutions table
- Constraints and solutions table
- Map of area to be served

When writing captions for tables and figures, write descriptive, positive sentences.

- Good example: "Project combines expertise of medical faculty, alternative health practitioners, and specialists in curriculum development and delivery."

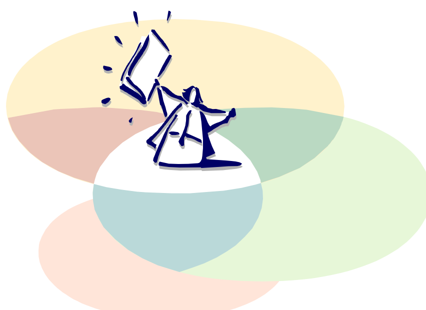
- Poor example: "Project personnel"

Your information design should directly reflect the thinking task you are asking of your audience. If the purpose behind the presentation is to understand x+y=z, then the display should be designed to represent x+y=z. Before designing your charts, think: what is the thinking task I am asking of the audience? Then display that thinking task graphically.

Don't make your audience think too much or solve legend codes to understand your charts and figures. The point should be obvious.

You can use smaller fonts in charts and tables, but ensure they can be read easily and quickly.

"Good design is clear thinking made visible." ~Edward Tufte http://www.edwardtufte.com



VIII. Pulling it all together

A. Ask colleagues for feedback
- Ask ahead of time.
- Ask people who will be good, critical reviewers. (It's better to hear bad news and find the mistakes now rather than later.)
- Ask people who are experts in the topic area.
- Ask people who are not experts in the topic area (it's likely at least a few of your reviewers will not be experts in the topic area—but the proposal should still make sense to non-experts).
- Send the full draft of the narrative to colleagues at least 2 weeks before the deadline, and ask that they return it within a week. Provide them with the RFA/review criteria.
- Send a clean draft (they don't need to proof-read for you, they need to evaluate your arguments).

B. When you can't write, work: finish everything you can early
- Fill out your forms as soon as possible. (Adobe Acrobat is your friend)

- Don't be afraid to e-mail the program officers or funding agencies questions.
- Complete your cover page and appendix.
- Edit your proposal to ensure vigorous prose: optimally, each word does real work.
- Keep all your letters of support in one place.

C. Institutional approvals
- Submit internal paperwork early.
- Let your director know when you'll need his/her signature, and schedule it.
- Know ahead of time if you need the signatures of people outside your building (Board President, Principal, Superintendent, University official, etc.), and plan accordingly.

D. Countdown to FedEx
- Do a final read through--be patient.
- Organize all the components.
- Finish the page count and table of contents. Include page numbers on every page of the proposal, including forms and support letters.
- Make the needed copies—the total that go to the agency and the total you need for your organization.
- Count the pages after they come out of the copier (really).
- Abandon your hard work to the good folks at FedEx! Keep the tracking number to track it online.

IX. The Reviewer's perspective

Responsive Proposals should be responsive to the application guidelines and responsive to the goals of the funding agency. (Do the research to ensure you are responsive to the agency's goals.)

Familiar Proposals should not be surprises. Use appropriate, familiar language. The proposal should look and feel like the funding agency's materials. Use their phrases, their language, their design.

Accurate Proposals should be accurate in big ways (the data must be correct, the plan must be possible, nothing overstated) and in little ways (no typos, the table of contents is correct).

Verifiable You're selling yourself and your ideas, but do not overstate the evidence. Give credentials for doing your project. It isn't usually enough just to have a good idea.

Benefit-oriented What are the benefits of the project? The proposal must focus on the benefits of the project. (Not just why you need the money to do it.) Put yourself in the mindset of someone who wants to help society: you would want to give the money to someone who would do the project anyway if money wasn't a barrier, and you want to give the money to a project with the most bang for your buck.

Answers the funding agent's question, "Why me?" If a proposal is verifiable and benefit oriented, it will explain why the funding agent should fund your project , now, with you as the principal investigator.

If you write four proposals and one of them gets funded, you're a superstar! Develop a thick skin, but don't lose your ability to learn from the feedback provided by the reviewers and/or funding agency.

Additional Resources

WK Kellogg Foundation Logic Model Process
http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub3669.pdf

Measuring the Difference http://nnlm.gov/evaluation/

The Foundation Center's guide to proposal writing (short course)
http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html

The Foundtion Center's FAQ (includes sample documents)
http://fdncenter.org/learn/faqs/index.html

Example RFP & proposal

RFP: http://nnlm.gov/projects/funding/aehi_rfp2004/

Proposal: http://www.jocohealth.net/Files/docs/nnlm_proposal_JoCo2004.pdf