

Preparing a Winning Grant Proposal



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<https://sullivanny.us/Departments/grants>



PREPARING A WINNING GRANT PROPOSAL

A standard grant proposal should include these sections:

- **Summary**
- **Introduction to the Applicant Organization**
- **Problem or Needs Statement**
- **Objective**
- **Method**
- **Evaluation Plan**
- **Future Funding**
- **Budget**

Summary

- Keep it short. If proposal is single spaced, make it a ½ page; if double spaced, make it a full page;
- Include all elements of the proposal;
- Keep it interesting and deal with most compelling issue first; and
- Include what you're asking for within the summary.

Introduction to the Applicant Organization

- Address the organization's credibility and history.
- Rise above the competition.

NOTE: The reviewer will expect to see the following information about your organization:

- Mission Statement or Goal
- How long in operation
- Performance history aka your track record
- Other funding sources currently being utilized by the applicant organization
- The number of clients served
- The number of clients that will benefit from this project
- Accreditations
- Uniqueness

Problem, Objective & Method

Problem:

- State why the organization is concerned about the problem identified;
- Address the - who, how many, where and what issues;
- Use research-based data to make the case for what is causing the problem;
- Discuss what will happen if your organization does not act to address the problem;
- Support the existence of the problem with statistics, quotes and analysis.

Objective:

- Include information about what changes you want to see;
- The objectives should state who or what will be changed, in what direction, by how much and in what time frame;
- The objectives should be measurable, specific, achievable, time specific and relevant;
There are three types of objectives:
 1. **Proven Process** - already works- want to do more of it.
 2. **Outcome** - measuring the change in the incidence of problem.
 3. **Indicator**- measuring signs that the incidence of the problem is likely to decline (research-based).
- You may have more than one objective for a single problem;
- Conduct a trial run of your objective to see what your results would be.

Method:

- Address the processes you will be using to meet the objectives;
- Clearly state *who* will do *what* and *when*;
- Address other options considered and make sure that your methods for meeting the objective are research based;
- Chart out your methods. Chart format could consist of the activity, timeframe, person / party responsible for carrying out the method, identification of the partners, where the method will be carried out and the costs involved;
- Organize your methods - chronologically, by target group, thematically, geographically and /or by objective; and
- Be specific about why the work will be done in a specific way, what challenges you expect and your strategy for dealing with those challenges.



Evaluation Plan

- Having an evaluation plan will help to ensure you are meeting the proposed program objectives; and
- It should be developed using research-based, proven plans of evaluation. Increasingly, funders want to see that you are making good use of the funds provided and that you are paying attention to future program development needs.

Future Funding

- What funds will you use to continue the program after the grant ends? (Funders are interested in funding programs that show longevity.)
- Who else is contributing to the project or program?
- Is the funding secured?

Budget

- The total budget for the project is made up of the amount of money requested and the amount being used from other sources;
- Include all line items and budget realistically;
- Refrain from rounding off to the nearest \$10K and do not include cents in your figures;
- Involve fiscal staff in the budget process;
- Do *not* include a budget line item for "Miscellaneous"; and
- When drafting the budget justification, explain in brief how the calculations were arrived at. You can use bullet style in the budget justification.

Questions?

Contact the Department of Grants
Administration at 845-807-0468.

Additional Points About How to Develop a Problem / Need Statement

The "Problem / Need Statement" delineates the problem within the community to be addressed. Data is provided to substantiate the need and a human interest story can be included to make the issue more personal.

- The statement is used to educate the funder about the community problem or need the organization seeks to address. The statement will enable a reviewer to learn more about the issues by its presentation of the facts and of the evidence that supports the need for the project. This section of the grant proposal also establishes that the applicant understands the problem / need and therefore will be able to appropriately address it. The information used to support the case can come from authorities in the field, as well as from your own experience.
- The statement of need should be succinct, yet persuasive.

The Function & Importance of the Problem / Need Statement

The function of the statement is to discuss the problem/need in a way that makes the funder want to help with it.

- Problem: a community or external constituency need;
- Action: what your organization proposes to do to address the problem; and
- Solution: the positive outcome that results from the action effecting change on the problem;
- Problem + Action = Solution;

The statement demonstrates to the funder that there is a problem /need that is important and urgent. This statement must relate both to your organization's mission statement and to the funder's priorities.





Problem / Need Statement Should Include the Following Information:

- **Description of the problem /need:** What is the problem / need? Who? What? Where? When? Why?
- **Recognition of the problem / need:** Why is it a problem /need? Who else sees it as a problem /need? What are the views of community stakeholders about this problem / need?
- **Need for resolution of the problem /need:** What will happen to the population served and to the community if the problem / need is not resolved? Is there a cost to society?
- **Hurdles that need to be overcome before the problem /need is solved:** Clearly identify the challenges involved in addressing the problem /need. Describe the gap between what exists now and what ought to be. What has prevented resolution of the problem /need?
- **Urgency required to address problem / need:** Why does it need to be addressed now? What is currently being done about the problem /need?
- **Human interest story:** Provide a real example of how the problem is affecting someone's life and how the proposed program will impact his/her life. Make it real.

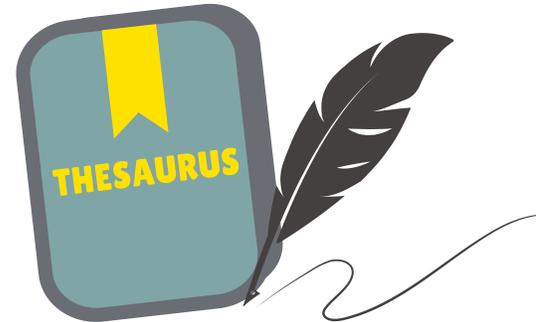
Pitfalls to Avoid in Developing a Problem Statement:

- Leaving out information asked for in the Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Proposing a project that is outside the scope of the RFP
- Using outdated or unsubstantiated information
- Providing insufficient data or too much statistical information
- Including unfamiliar concepts or terms
- Long, convoluted sentences

General Tips for Writing a Grant Application

Use strong words for a lively proposal that stands out from others.

A good source for examples of creative wording is the book *Spunk & Bite: A Writer's Guide to Bold, Contemporary Style* by Arthur Plotnik.



Examples of weighty words:

- *Innovative, ground-breaking, pioneering* instead of *new*
- *Impoverished, poverty-stricken, needy* instead of *poor*

Make the language tight—pare down and condense — more is not necessarily better, especially if there are page limits!



NOTE: The bottom line is that in order to develop a program that will be funded; the program must seek to solve the problem or address the need that both your organization and the funder are interested in and the project must generate results that are measurable.

Give the reviewer hope.

The picture you paint should not be so grim that the solution appears hopeless. If you do that, the funder will wonder whether an investment in your solution would be worthwhile. Here's an example of a solid statement of need that is hopeful:

"Breast cancer kills. But statistics prove that regular check-ups catch most breast cancer in the early stages, reducing the likelihood of death. Hence, a program to encourage preventive check-ups will reduce the risk of death due to breast cancer."

Decide whether you can demonstrate that your project / program addresses the need differently or better than others that preceded it.

It is often difficult to describe the need for your project / program without being critical of the competition. Being critical of others will not be well received by the funder. It may cause the funder to look more carefully at your own project / program to see why you felt you had to build your case by demeaning others. The funder may have invested in these other projects or may begin to consider them, now that you have brought them to the funder's attention. If possible, you should make it clear that you are cognizant of, and on good terms with, others doing work in your field.



Avoid circular reasoning.

When you use circular reasoning, you would typically present the absence of your solution as the actual problem. Then your solution is offered as the way to solve the problem.

For example, the circular reasoning for building a community swimming pool might go like this: *"The problem is that we have no pool in our community. Building a pool will solve the problem."* A more persuasive case would show what a pool has meant to a neighboring community, permitting it to offer recreation, exercise, and physical therapy programs. The statement might refer to a survey that underscores the target audience's planned usage of the facility and conclude with the connection between the proposed usage and potential benefits to enhance life in the community.

Using Data and Statistics

The role of data and statistics is to back up the issue that you are addressing, by utilizing reliable information sources. The data you use should be as current as possible and it should be unbiased. In order to make sure that you are using unbiased data, you need to be aware of who did the research and who funded it. In addition, use authoritative data that is considered reputable by others. Data functions to describe, compare, trend, predict and explain.

Decide which facts or statistics best support the project.

Be sure the data you present is accurate. There are few things more embarrassing than to have the funder tell you that your information is out of date or incorrect. Information that is too generic or broad will not help you develop a winning argument for your project. Similarly, using information that does not relate to your organization or to the project you are presenting will cause the funder to question the entire proposal.





Data Searches and Useful Web Sites for Accessing Data / Statistics

Demographic information clearinghouses, federal agencies, state agencies, foundations and other nonprofits, databases, scholarly journals and articles, and industry publications are key resources for gathering statistics and data. While this list is not comprehensive, these sources are a good starting point.

US Census Website www.census.gov

Of particular interest is information about Sullivan County and its communities that is available through the US Census web site. A good starting point is to go to *Sullivan County QuickFacts* at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/36/36105.html>. You can also find a Fact Sheet for the city/town name or zip code that you are focusing on. The Fact Sheet will provide information such as population, median household income, number of individuals speaking languages other than English at home, poverty levels, etc. National comparisons are also available on the Fact Sheet. You can print a Fact Sheet out for New York which will allow you to compare your community to the state as a whole.

American Fact Finder <http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml>

This is another handy tool to provide you with statistics. The data is compiled from several censuses and from a number of separate surveys such as the American Community Survey and the American Housing Survey. You can obtain data at the state, county, municipality, town, zip code, census tract, and block group level. Reference maps are available so you can pinpoint the exact locations for which you need data. Information can be downloaded into Excel files.

FedStats & Federal Agency Websites www.fedstats.gov

Search by *keyword or topic* and this site will link you to federal agencies who maintain those statistics. Search by *location* and you will pull up a fact sheet for that location (also available on the Census website). You can also search by agency. Many federal agencies maintain a lot of research information online.

A few examples include:

- *Bureau of Labor Statistics*: www.bls.gov. This is often fastest way to find information at the national, state, or local level is (click on —Local Unemployment Rates on the right and scroll down to find NY information);
- *USDA Economic Research Service*: www.ers.usda.gov (Try —Publications or —Data Sources);
- *Department of Health & Human Services*: www.hhs.gov/reference/;
- *HHS Reference Collection*: <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/>; and
- *Administration for Children and Families*: www.acf.hhs.gov

NYS Agency Websites <https://www.ny.gov/agencies>

Websites from various agencies in New York State offer a wealth of information. Locate all New York State agencies, including the NYS Department of Health and NYS Office for the Aging.

Demographics Now www.freedemographics.com

This is a free information service. Basic demographic data including income and employment statistics can be found on the website. You can search by the entire US, State, County, Census Tract, Block Group, US Places, ZIP Codes, etc. Information can be downloaded.

United for ALICE <https://www.unitedforalice.org/state-overview/new-york>

ALICE stands for *Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed*. The Research Center–New York provides a source for exploring the latest ALICE data on this growing population of individuals in our state.