

# Writing Effectively



# General Tips for Writing a Strong Proposal



# Style and Voice

When writing a grant proposal, always try to speak in an active - rather than a passive – voice.

Which example demonstrates an active voice?:

“Our organization provides a better life for runaway children”.

“Runaway children associated with our organization can experience a better life”.

# Style and Voice

Active Voice:

“Our organization provides a better life for runaway children”.

Passive Voice:

“Runaway children associated with our organization can experience a better life”.

# Style and Voice

- Keep your message positive
- Don't get wrapped up explaining all the challenges your organization faces
- Focus more on describing the good your organization does
- Describe the human element of your project

# Style and Voice

When writing your proposal keep in mind that:

- Foundation executives want to know that people will benefit and your work will strengthen their community

# Style and Voice

Try to avoid industry terms or other kinds of jargon whenever possible.

- Even if a foundation reviewer is already an expert in the field, it's unlikely that other members on the board have the same level of experience or expertise

# Style and Voice

It's important to be enthusiastic about your organization and its goals, but you should try to guard against overselling your message.

- Foundation boards want to know that your feet are planted firmly on the ground
- They are considering an investment to your organization and are constantly scrutinizing your professional credibility



# Style and Voice

Don't leave the reader to assume anything.

- A strong proposal communicates your purpose to everyone and should include any and all information that is relevant to your cause

# First Draft

Getting past that first draft is often the most difficult and challenging aspect of writing a proposal.

- Try to put together a complete first draft before you begin editing
- Don't worry too much about sentence structure, spelling or grammar at the outset
- Clean it up in later drafts

# First Draft

- In this early stage, it's more important that the structure of your proposal is sound and all your key messages are included
- When writing your first draft get to the point as early as possible

# First Draft

- It is difficult for foundation directors to give a thorough read of all the proposals that land on their desk
- They want to determine your needs as early as possible
- Develop a strong Executive Summary that contains all your key points and can stand alone

# Statistics and Examples

Whenever possible, try using concrete examples to illustrate your arguments.

- A strong technique for including real world examples is to reference a recently publicized issue or event
- Using a current public debate as an example will drive your message home to readers and provide a way for them to personally identify with your message

# Statistics and Examples

- Facts and figures also help to support your argument, while developing awareness of the extent and severity of your cause
- Don't just provide a whole bunch of data – provide an interpretation and analyze those facts for the reader

# Editing

Make sure to proofread your proposal thoroughly before sending it out!

- Every punctuation or grammatical error detracts from your overall message and damages your credibility
- If you don't have solid proof reading and editing skills, find someone that does!

# Consistency

If you want to build a more coherent and cohesive proposal, let one person take charge of the entire project, rather than writing it by committee.

- This way you will achieve a consistent style and tone



# Length

Although the length of a proposal can vary significantly, most foundation boards prefer to see short, succinct proposals six to eight pages in length.

- The size of a proposal speaks volumes about your organization's clarity of thought and purpose

# Objectives

Be certain you can achieve the project objectives you made in your proposal.

- If approved, your proposal becomes a legal agreement
- An honest approach is always best
- Be frank about your organization's strengths and weaknesses and make sure you can deliver on your promises

# Writing Effectively

Writing a formal grant proposal is no easy task. It requires time and dedication. When you begin writing remember to:

- Keep your message positive
- Whenever possible have more than one person proofread the final version of your proposal before sending it out

# Questions about Writing Effectively?

