

Introduction

Proposal writing skills are now essential to many occupations and organizations. Since the third edition of this book was published in 1988, the world of grants and contracts has undergone many changes.

The content of proposals has evolved. The format for proposals has become much more standardized due to the adoption of common application forms. Requirements to state the purposes of a project as “outcomes” and include a logic model for “outcome-based evaluation” are now standard in many governmental and private funding sources. In addition, the preparation of budgets for proposals has become more complex as donors ask applicants to cost-share or to fund proposals from several sources. A growing number of grantmakers only want to support projects that show appropriate collaboration with various partners in both funding and implementation.

The relative availability of private versus governmental monies has also shifted. In inflation-adjusted terms, government support to nonprofits increased 195 percent between 1977 and 1997, boosting receipts from government from 31 percent of total grant revenue in the early 1980s to 37 percent by the end of the 1990s. By comparison, the overall Gross Domestic Product rose only 81 percent in real terms during this same period (1). State government has become a far more important site of decisions on funds flowing from the federal government, as well as those provided by local tax dollars.

In the private sector, private foundations now award more money than corporations. For 2001,

private foundation grants were 12.2 percent of total charitable giving, compared to only 4.3 percent from corporations (2). Foundation budgets continue to grow at rates well in advance of inflation, while, in recent years, grants from corporations have stagnated. Yet, the wise proposal writer knows that, although the government clearly offers the largest amount of grant-in-aid monies, funding from the private sector is increasingly important in supporting innovation and experimentation.

A related trend has been the growing number of government and private funders that now wish to support only the “best” organizations to accomplish the grantmaker’s particular goals. The sections of a proposal documenting the capability and reputation of the individuals and institutions to be involved in the project have never been as critical.

Not surprisingly, the competition for grants-in-aid continues to increase. The number of organizations in the United States qualifying for charitable, tax-exempt status rose 25 percent during the 1990s and more than 50 percent when compared to 1977 (3). This growth rate far outstripped increases in all types of public and private grant-in-aid sources during this same period. Many U.S. funding sources have begun accepting applications from not-for-profits registered in foreign countries or from social service-oriented, for-profit businesses here and abroad, slicing the pie ever thinner.

The Internet has significantly altered the circumstances of those seeking grant-in-aid funds. The words “proposal writing” used on any of the major Internet search engines results in more than

one million listings which give advice on ways to research funding sources or write proposals. *Many government agencies, foundations, and corporations now require that proposals be submitted online.* Several, such as the National Science Foundation (4) and the National Institutes of Health, offer free tutorials (5).

For all these reasons, it is more important than ever to know how to prepare an effective proposal. This book shares ideas for how to do that by drawing on over sixty years of combined experience in making grants, writing proposals, serving as consultants to private foundations and on federal and state review committees, chairing professional grantmaking and grantseeking associations and teaching proposal writing. It also includes the results of recent interviews with more than 100 federal and foundation program officers.

The book is based on two fundamental assumptions:

1. **There is social value in writing proposals to seek funding from private and governmental sources.** The application process is still one of the most democratic means we know for matching those who have ideas for improvements in society with those who have the resources to support such progress. Individuals and organizations with the creativity, drive, perseverance, and capacity to submit successful requests not only deserve the additional resources and prestige that grants can bring, but they are a primary means of creating desirable social change.
2. **There is no special mystique about proposal writing.** Anyone with a good, well-planned idea who has done careful research on sources of support and is *able to communicate effectively in writing* can do a successful job of preparing a funding request.

There are, however, some ways of approaching this task that can be profitably adopted by the novice—or even someone with proposal-writing experience. This book shares a wealth of those ideas and provides many examples.

Despite all the changes that have occurred, **the basic steps of planning, preparing, and submitting a winning proposal remain essentially the same.** The preparation of a proposal follows a pattern which, in many respects, is analogous to the traditional planning process found in the literature on management. By viewing proposal development as a process, one can begin to recognize repetitive steps that must be completed for any application and can build a reservoir of experience to be applied to the development of any funded project.

To aid this recognition, the book is organized in a logical progression of steps and is divided into three major parts. Part I deals with the planning and information collecting that should be done in advance of the actual proposal writing. Part II focuses primarily on writing the proposal. It also touches on submission, negotiation, and project renewal. Appendix A includes a detailed checklist to ensure that all of the major steps have been completed.

Appendix B, new in this edition, contains advice for those who teach courses or workshops on proposal writing. It includes sample syllabi for a nine-session course and a one-day workshop. It also includes suggested assignments for each chapter in the book.

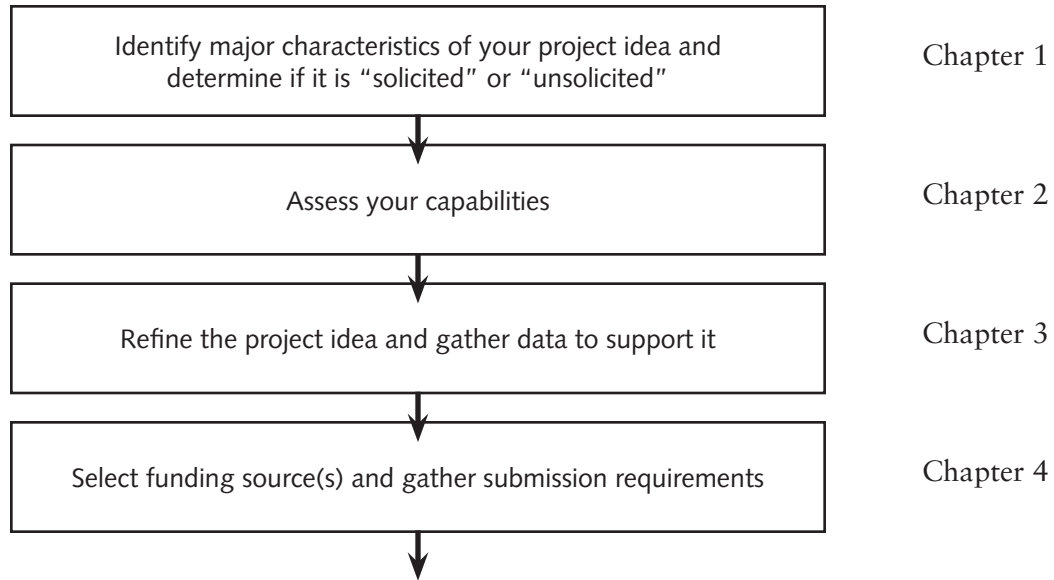
CHAPTER REFERENCES

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2. AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy, *Giving USA 2002*. Sewickley, PA: Author, June 2002.
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4. National Science Foundation, “Grant Proposal Guide.” Retrieved from <http://www.nsf.gov/home/menus/funding.htm>
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Figure I-1. Diagram of Proposal Development Process

PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Phase 1: Essential Planning Steps



Phase 2: Writing and Submitting the Proposal

