

THE FUNDABLE PROPOSAL

HINTS AND TOOLS FOR iEARN FUNDRAISERS

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for the:

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Executive Summary

IEARN seeks to assist iEARN coordinators worldwide to raise funds through the development of high-quality proposals for foundations and other grant-giving entities.

Grants are very difficult to obtain for small organizations like iEARN. Nevertheless, grants can often be very rewarding and help a small organization grow and serve more participants. iEARN as a whole has benefited greatly from the numerous grants that several iEARN centers have received over the past ten years.

During the process of soliciting these grants, many iEARN coordinators around the globe have gained much knowledge about writing text, developing budgets, and preparing supporting materials for proposals. The following guide shares this knowledge so that iEARN centers worldwide can raise funds more effectively.

Introduction

To raise funds through grants takes courage. Staff and volunteer time is precious and budgets are small. Competition is fierce and rejection is more common than successful bids. In the United States, less than ten percent of funds given to NGOs and institutions come from grants, and much of those funds go to universities. An average U.S. organization, where a majority of grant-givers exist, is lucky to have one-fourth of its proposals accepted for funding. Understaffed organizations with overburdened personnel face rejection, frustration, short deadlines, and tight budgets daily to keep their organizations fiscally sound, innovative, and leaders in their fields.

Yet, the well-made proposal can be a valuable investment for an organization wanting to strengthen existing programs or launch a new effort. Besides the monetary benefit of receiving a grant (that is, if you have designed your budget well!), a funded proposal is reassurance that someone else believes in your work as much as you do, that you are contributing something important to your field of expertise, and that your organization is seen to be well managed and capable of handling money wisely.

Making complex, cutting-edge programs seem simple and needed to a funder is an art form. Proposals, the vehicle for expressing your idea to a funder, are a research project, a writing assignment, an accounting exercise, a partnership process, and a sales pitch all in one package. The proposal development process is intricate and should not be taken lightly. In fact, taking at least as much courage as the decision to develop a proposal is the decision NOT to develop a proposal.

Excellent proposals are often not funded; poor proposals have no chance whatsoever. Both types of proposals are a serious investment of time and resources. Therefore, if you are going to develop a proposal, make it excellent or do not make the investment at all. If you do not have the staff time to do the necessary research, budgeting, partnering, writing, and editing to develop a superior product, find the courage to not let your organization waste its valuable resources.

Below are several hints and examples for iEARN coordinators and staff who seek to sharpen their skills to develop a proposal for submission to foundations and grant-giving agencies of governments or multilateral development entities. Please do not let these following hints and examples be the only information you use as you develop your proposal. Fundraising workshops, books and guides, Internet sites, and foundations offer good [resources](#) for those developing proposals.

This guide is intended to be updated and expanded to fit the needs of the iEARN community. Please send us your sample proposals, comments, suggestions, and links to helpful resources. And, good luck!

Getting Started

- **F**act-Find
- **U**se Utilities
- **N**ominate a Narrator
- **D**ocuments Your Development Direction
- **S**ynchronize Staff Schedules

Fact-Find: Thorough research is critical to developing a fundable proposal. Three types of knowledge, each of which involves a commitment of resources, are important: knowledge of the funder, knowledge of the field, and knowledge of similar organizations, which are potential partners.

First, know what the funder wants and use language from the funder's publication to show the funder you do understand what it wants. Who has the funder given grants to before? For how much? How many times per year? In which countries is there a focus? Is curriculum design most important to a funder or are training workshops? One obvious question to raise at this point is, "Do we change what we do to fit the needs of the funder or do we ask the funder to give us money for what we do now?" The answer is, "Both." The funder-recipient relationship should be a reciprocal partnership: the funder has money and you have a service to provide with that money. As always, a good partnership means sharing common goals. Let this sense of partnership permeate the proposal.

Second, collect and cite references in the field—statistics, quotations, trade articles—to make the case that this program is addressing an important issue. Grab the funder's attention by making a solid case, backed by compelling evidence, that your program is unique and indispensable to progress in your field of expertise. Although telecommunications technology is a relatively new field and may lack a wide range of longitudinal studies, most funders have vast experience with education and training programs and will apply what they learned to their new focus on technology. Use your experiences to build bridges for funders to understand the links from old funding paradigms to new ones.

Third, similar to having knowledge in your field, is having knowledge of your other organizations that do similar or complementary work to iEARN. These organizations are potential partners. Learn about your colleagues' programs. Often, these programs will work well with iEARN and you will be able to join forces and submit a joint proposal. Partners are practical and add value to your program. Unfortunately, partners are usually not an organization's top priority. Often, after an organization is deep into developing its proposal it realizes that it needs partners to help in certain areas. Think about partnering early. Last second partnerships are notoriously difficult to manage.

And, of course, the more partners you have, the less competitors you will have!

Although collaborating with your colleagues is almost always better than competing against them, most organizations pursue their own interests first and usually there is not enough

grant money available for all the good ideas that deserve funding, even ones driven by a consortia of partners. Thus, knowing what makes your program more attractive to a funder than your colleague's program is important.

Read Web sites, annual reports, and news releases and talk with participants of programs sponsored by your targeted funder. Knowing how other funded programs have worked (or failed) helps you improve your program and its chances of being funded.

Use Utilities: iEARN participants are excellent implementers of information technology. Use your skills to do research, write, make budgets, and network with partners quickly and easily. Although each proposal will be custom-made for each potential funder, templates may be designed to help accelerate the process of making a budget and bookmarked Web sites, listservices, and e-mail make excellent research tools.

Do not try, however, to learn how to use your software applications on the day the proposal is due. Making margins even, inserting page numbers, and adding footnotes to your narrative, for example, can be nerve-wrecking if attempted immediately before a deadline.

Nominate a Narrator: Taking the team track is good, but submitting a narrative with different styles of writing is not. Joint writing is confusing without a dedicated narrator who can synthesize each part into a coherent whole. Choose a good writer (not necessarily the editor) to work with each team member from the beginning of the proposal to the end. Writing is an art, not a mindless mechanical process. Keep your proposal from becoming clumsy, dissonant or lifeless by working with a wordsmith.

Document Your Development Direction: Every good organization has a *development strategy* or *development plan* for fundraising that includes goals and objectives, a budget, a timeline, staff responsibilities, etc. An aspect of the development plan is targeting prospective funders. Once a list of potential funders is agreed upon, then more intensive research begins. Keep information up-to-date and keep records for each potential funders. Pay attention to a foundation's *funding cycle*, which are the dates its uses for announcing funding or accepting proposals. Soon, you will notice that many funders require similar information. Improve your efficiency by having this often-needed information ready to use in electronic and paper formats.

For example: compile updated résumés, curriculum vitae, and biographical sketches of key staff; write an organizational background statement that can be "cut-and-pasted" into any proposal; and use a spreadsheet template for budgets.

Track the time and resources needed per proposal throughout the year to help next year's planning. Keep a library of proposals both funded and rejected for future reference.

Synchronize Staff Schedules: Developing a proposal takes teamwork. Both small and large teams of researchers, accountants, writers, editors, and other support persons need to

be managed so that precious staff time is not wasted. Staff coordination is especially needed when working with a partner organization.

Assign a proposal manager to coordinate the effort with the understanding that each staff's time is equally important, no matter the difference in title, salary, or responsibility within the organization. Most often, staff has a thousand other things to be doing besides spending time on a proposal that may or may not be funded. Make sure that deadlines are met and not all of the work is left for the last minute.

Have staff schedule time for the proposal, and extra time for the days just before the submission date. If you have important training workshops or conferences to attend during the weeks before, during or after a proposal deadline, you must plan carefully or choose not to submit the proposal at all. Proposal development sometimes causes enormous stress and frustration among staff and families, so managers should be sensitive to sharing the burden as equitably as possible. (See [Take Team Track](#) for more.)

Proposal Parts

Proposals may range from 1,000 words in length to more than 10,000 words. No matter its size and scope, good proposals have similar parts, each of which intended to demonstrate to the funder that the applicant organization has planned well and is capable of managing the financial and programmatic requirements of the program. Most funders will provide guidelines that let the applicant know the length, format, and components needed for the proposal. Here are five common parts of a proposal:

A [title page](#) is the first impression a funder usually gets of an organization and contains basic information, such as the title of the program, contact information, and date of submission. Many funders may provide cover sheets that the applicant must use.

An [executive summary](#) or [abstract](#) is a synopsis of the proposed program.

The [persuasive narrative](#) is a well-written description of the proposed program, which often includes: the problem statement, the project description, a brief background of the applicant, a calendar of activities, and management and evaluation sections.

A [competitive budget](#) is the most important part of your proposal; the budget becomes your contract with the funder.

Typical [supporting material](#) includes: résumés and/or curriculum vitae, support letters from partners and participants, media coverage, and an organization's financial and legal documents.

Title Page/Cover Letter

Many funders specify how they prefer the title page or cover letter of a submitted proposal to look. Common ingredients of the title page are:

- The title of the project;
- The name, address, telephone, Web site, and e-mail contact of the applicant;
- The name of the director of the organization;
- The date of submission;
- The title of the grant competition or grant division, if appropriate; and
- The amount of the request.

If there is no specific outline for the title page, keep the title page as simple as possible. A little color is always welcome, too. ([Sample title page 1 and 2.](#))

Sometimes, a funder requests a cover letter to be included with a title page. Write the cover letter on letterhead, thanking the funder for accepting your submission. Keep it simple, polite, and hopeful.

Executive Summary/Abstract

Similar to an academic abstract, an executive summary is a brief summary of the proposed program. Although the applicant should be able to summarize its program at any time during the proposal writing process, executive summaries are usually written after the narrative is completed. Summaries should contain no extraneous information. Just the facts, ma'am! Often, summaries are used by funders for press releases, so write as if the entire world will be reading this eventually. Also, funders with little time may judge or (pre-judge) the worthiness of your program from their reading of the executive summary. Catch their attention with a vibrant, easy-to-grasp first impression of your important idea. ([Sample executive summary.](#))

The Persuasive Narrative

The narrative is the part of the proposal where you "sell" your idea to the funder. The narrative must be catchy, but substantive; thorough, but concise; and optimistic, but concerned. The narrative must present an important and pressing problem that needs to be solved, but not a problem so large that your efforts will mean little. Writing a persuasive narrative is a balancing act that needs strong editing skills, good research, and a clarity of purpose to be successful.

The narrative introduces the rationale behind the program, sets down the goals and objectives, reviews the organization's background, and explains program methodology including management and assessment strategies. In short, the narrative outlines the when, where, what, why, and who of the program.

The narrative should parallel the budget, adding substance to the figures to make the program seem more of service to people, rather than simply a business proposition. After putting a currency value on every aspect of its program, the narrative allows the organization the opportunity to put a human face on all those same aspects of its program.

Similar to the budget, the narrative should be constantly reviewed and edited throughout the proposal development process. Neither the budget nor the narrative should look as if it has

been deemed less important than any other component of the proposal. The budget and narrative, like the executive summary and the supporting materials, should be seamless when submitted to a funder.

Below are several hints, including suggestions on structuring your narrative, and sample narratives to help you put together a good narrative if you decide to invest the time in developing a proposal.

- **Write Well**
- **Ready your Research**
- **Invest In Implementation**
- **Take the Team Track**
- **Edit, Edit, Edit**

Write Well: Perhaps the most important aspect of writing a persuasive proposal narrative, besides being clear and succinct, is to build confidence in the funder. Choose a lexicon of words which radiate confidence, competence, efficiency, control, comprehensiveness, trust, flexibility, innovation, inspiration and industriousness. If you have doubts about your proposed program, do not submit your proposal. Your doubts will creep into your narrative and you will lose credibility with the grant-maker.

On the other hand, do not be overconfident and arrogant. Your organization is not self-sufficient and you have needs. You are attempting to build a partnership with a funder, a partnership that you want to be based upon reciprocity, two-way learning, and mutual respect.

That said, an organization cannot be 100% sure what will happen during a project. Budgets are estimates and narratives describe a best-case scenario. Reliable telecommunications, for example, is an uncertain prospect in many countries. A funder understands this. Therefore, a funder is looking for an organization that can effectively manage uncertainty. Write to convince the funder that you will meet these challenges and your program will adapt and be successful.

Ready your Research: In order to write with confidence about your program, especially about the importance of your program in terms of other initiatives in the field of educational technology applications, you must show you know your profession with anecdotal and statistical evidence. Use up-to-date research to bolster your case for funding. Let the funder know that you are a leader in your field, or at least an informed potential leader. Include quotes from educators and students whose lives have been changed due to your program.

Show the growth of your network in terms of schools joined, Web pages built, messages sent, publications produced, and teachers trained. Compare your program with other programs to show that you are taking the lead in your country for educational reform and telecommunications infrastructure development. Offer proof that your participants are making a difference in their communities through telecommunications collaboration.

Moreover, you need to know exactly in what type of program the funder wants to invest. For example, almost all proposal writers use language from the funder's publications. Using words and phrases that the funder deems important enough to use in its materials shows that you are paying attention to the funder's work and that your project is appropriate for a grant. If the funder's vocabulary does not fit well with yours, perhaps you have the wrong funder to which to submit a proposal.

Invest In Implementation: The majority of your effort constructing the narrative should be invested in a detailed implementation section. Each program activity should be clearly defined and explained, beginning with the day you sign the contract with the funder. Each activity should have a budget item to represent it and a place on your schedule or calendar. Suggested subsections of the implementation plan are listed below under [Narrative Structure](#).

Keep your implementation section active. Edit frequently and cut out unnecessary words and phrases. There is no need to explain the reason behind your activities, nor your experience conducting such activities. Simply tell the funder exactly what you will do with its money.

Take the Team Track: As all iEARN participants know well, working efficiently in teams is important in all projects. The project of writing a proposal narrative is no exception. Once the decision to submit a proposal is made, a team is formed. That team may include researchers, budget-makers, writers, editors, and other support persons. Ideally, each person on the team (and those outside the team) should have input into the narrative during all of its stages.

Although one writer should be responsible for the overall narrative so that the text sounds consistent throughout, it is important that the budget-makers, researchers, and editors have the opportunity to share in the creation of the narrative from the first day. This is often hoped for early in the project, then forgotten as a deadline approaches, and the head writer dumps the narrative on the head editor and asks the editor to "fix it up" in an hour or two. Or, the writing team asks the budget team to make sure the numbers match the activities the day before the deadline. The inevitable frustration, bruised egos, and panic that will ensue are not healthy for your staff or the quality of the proposal.

A smooth working team coordinates its efforts from the first day, setting up deadlines to meet goals which the team helps its members achieve. Throughout the development process, numbers (budget) and words (narrative) are integrated flawlessly into a proposal that tells a funder that the applicant organization is capable of working together as a team once it has the funder's money.

For those of you with small staffs, proposal development responsibilities may fall on only one or two persons. In this case, a team still should be assembled.

Edit, Edit, Edit: As the cliché goes, the three best words of advice for any writer in any language are: edit, edit, and edit. Fortunately, more and more funders are limiting the number of pages of text they want to receive from applicant organizations, so you must be succinct. Not only edit words, but formatting, as well. Numbers, lines, headings, charts, graphs, tables

should be easy to read, flow well with the text, and complement the concepts being proposed to the funder.

With those five hints in mind, let's look at the structure of a typical narrative.

Narrative Structure

Although many funders will ask for organizations to write narratives in specific ways, most narratives will include these six sections:

- Introduction/Problem Statement
- Goals & Objectives
- Background
- Implementation
- Management
- Summary

Introduction/Problem Statement: The introduction is your first opportunity to show the funder that you are able to eloquently describe your program and its purpose. The introduction also reassures the funder that you understand the issues in your field of expertise.

In this section, briefly describe the specific issues your program will address. Thorough research is critical. Know what the funder wants and use language from the funder's publication to show the funder you do understand what it wants. Cite references in the field—statistics, quotations, trade articles—to make the case that this program is addressing an important issue. Grab the funder's attention by making a solid case, backed by compelling evidence, that your program is unique and indispensable.

Be confident that your program will make a difference. Be visionary in your prose; the introduction sets the tone for the rest of the narrative.

This section is sometimes called the *Vision Statement*, *Rationale*, or *Problem Statement*.

Goals and Objectives: Clarity in this section is particularly crucial. Your goals and objectives section quickly shows a funder whether it should consider giving you its funds or not. Define your goals clearly; they are the driving force. State your objectives simply; they are essential for translating the vision of your introduction into concrete activities.

Many narrative writers become confused by the difference between goals and objectives. Here is a brief review:

Goals are *expectations of desired outcomes of the program*. For example, in the following two-year training program, iEARN seeks:

- To increase access to online resources K-12 schools in Africa.
- To promote collaborative learning among students in the US and Eastern Europe.

- To increase awareness of waste management issues among iEARN participants.
- To facilitate development of skills in fundraising among iEARN professionals.
- To increase on-line communication between iEARN students and health-care providers.
- To generate personal and institutional ties among students, educators, and their schools.
- To engage K-12 schools in ongoing communication, collaborative projects, and, where possible, the exchange of people to promote mutual understanding.

Note the use of broad, optimistic language. Goals do not need to commit your organization to meeting a predetermined level of achievement or success. You do not want to be vague in your goals, but you are expected to show overarching reasons (i.e. the big picture) you wish to undertake this program.

Objectives are the *specific steps you propose to take to achieve these desired outcomes*. For example, in the following program iEARN will:

Identify two professionals from each of the iEARN programs in Latin America to travel to the five-day iEARN International Conference in Puerto Rico, July 1999.
 Translate iEARN training materials into Arabic and Farsi.
 Evaluate the project in both quantitative and qualitative terms, tracking student performance in English-language reading, writing, and listening skills.
 Distribute 500 copies of *Planetary Notions* publication overseas to students and educators for use in classrooms.
 Recruit 100 iEARN participants from schools in Africa to write essays on waste management issues.

- Conduct a technology needs assessment of each new iEARN school and produce a list of those which need computers and connectivity;
- Equip each selected school with computers and providing it with Internet connectivity;
- Conduct professional development workshops for participating teachers, who can in turn train other teachers and students in their schools;
- Facilitate Internet-based collaboration projects among the students and teachers using iEARN resources;
- Provide ongoing training and technical support, ensuring schools maintain connectivity;
- Set up and maintain a web site and Web-based interactive forum as online vehicles for disseminating information to participating schools and encouraging interaction;

In contrast to the goals, objectives should be *measurable* (i.e. able to be evaluated), described in detail in the implementation section, and easily found in the budget and timeline. Objectives are the "nuts and bolts" of your program. They should be simple to understand, reasonable to complete, a good value for a funder, and they should directly support each one of the program's goals.

Make your Goals and Objectives section concise, easy to read, and simple to understand. Use action verbs and avoid passive verb constructions. Here are some examples:

- Use the active: "iEARN will evaluate the program."
- Not the passive: "The program will be evaluated"
- Use the active: "The educators attended the workshop in November."
- Not the passive: "The workshop was attended by the educators in November."

Background: Now that you have the funder's attention, let it know who you are and the important work you have done in the past. But DO NOT ramble on about ALL your accomplishments and do not boast (if you are so great, why then do you need to ask for money?) Depending on the length requirements of the narrative, you may want to keep this section short in the narrative, but then add more information about your organization and its accomplishments in an appendix (if this is allowed). If your iEARN experience is recent in your country, relate the accomplishments of the global iEARN network.

Here's what you should consider including:

- History of organization, including mission, goals, incorporation date, legal status, size of network, and the locations of office(s) and programs;
- Organizational experience in the field;
- Honors and awards;
- Experience as a grant recipient;
- Experience managing educational technology programs;
- Successful training workshops; and
- Developing strategic partnerships

Implementation: This is the heart of your narrative and your entire proposal. This section should be the most detailed and extensive section in the narrative. In general, the implementation section, also called the *Program Outline, Program Strategy, Program Plan, or Methodology*, describes how each of the objectives will be carried out by your organization. Moreover, this section should describe how these objectives will be measured and when and where the program activities will take place.

Implementation sections often have the following subsections:

- *Schedule of Activities*—a day-by-day or month-by-month (depending on the length of the program) calendar of events, including travel dates, workshops, publications, reports, etc;
- *Program Activities Plans*—detailed descriptions of each component of the program orientation, recruitment, curricula development, publications dissemination, travel, training, etc. This section should parallel exactly the schedule of activities and the budget;
- *Evaluation/Assessment Strategy*—an evaluation strategy should be described. Assessing the impact of the program is crucial, especially if you want to make the case that it should continue and be refunded. There are several quantitative and qualitative assessment models, including pre and post-program interviews, essays, and questionnaires; mid-program site visit evaluations by an independent evaluator; and on-line compiling and assessing of participant messages. You may want to research which method or model the funder prefers. **Note:** the evaluation should not be an afterthought. The evaluation should be integrated into the program narrative and budget and be considered an important aspect of the program from its beginning to end. Participants and staff should be thinking about the evaluation during the entire program, and should not be surprised by the evaluation or think of it as a time-consuming annoyance at the end of a trip or workshop;
- *Follow-Up Activities Plan*—like the evaluation, this section should show foresight and integration into the narrative and budget. Once the main programs activities are completed, you do not want the program to come to a screeching halt. iEARN programs are fortunate because they have a

built-in structure for sustainability the conferences but you should also be creative in suggesting ways that the participants of your program will continue their activities now that the funding has been exhausted. Staff and participants joining the program should be planning follow-up activities at the beginning of the program and should make a commitment to undertake these activities when they become participants; and

- *Impact*—Estimate how many and what types of people will participate in your program. For example, give the number of direct participants (classroom students or training workshop attendees) and indirect participants, such as those who attend a program function, provide donations or services to the participants, or those, like parents, who read about your program on your Web site, a publication, or a press release.

Management: Although there will be mention of specific management responsibilities in the implementation section, it is a good idea to include a section devoted to reassuring the funder that you have the staff, resources, and network to successfully undertake the proposed program. Funders like to see actual names of staff connected to a specific program activity, if possible. Brief *bios* paragraph-length summaries of curriculum vitae (CVs) and *résumés* may be included, but CVs or *résumés* should be included as an appendix, as well.

The management section is the place to explain how you will follow all regulations, financial rules, and sound accounting and banking practices. The funder should have full confidence in your ability to manage the funds it is giving to your organization.

Summary: This is your last word. Use it to make your case (yet again!) that your program is the best solution to the stated problem at this time and at this price. In fact, your program is a good step towards beginning to solve the sweeping issues (addressed in the introduction). Like the conclusion to an essay, the summary should be a thoughtful wrap-up of the story your proposal has told.

Sample Narratives

The following narratives have been chosen from a variety of iEARN-USA proposals submitted to funders during the past four years. Each provides examples of how to structure a narrative following the suggestions above. The CIVICS proposal includes a

- **LAWS OF LIFE.** Proposal to the John Templeton Foundation in July 1998. ([Sample narrative \(LOL\).](#))
- **CIVICS 2.0.** Proposal submitted in October 1999 to the U.S. Department of State, “to provide practical, on-line ESL/EFL tools to educators from Egypt, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and the United States to enhance their civic education and social science curricula.” ([Sample narrative \(CIVICS 2.0\).](#))

The Competitive Budget:

Arguably, the budget is the most important component of a proposal. The budget quickly shows a funder that:

- 1) your program is well conceived;
- 2) you have followed the guidelines;
- 3) your organizations is capable of converting grant money into a valuable service;
- 4) you are committed to putting your own resources into the program; and
- 5) you are capable of entering into a contractor partnership with another organization, agency, or institution.

In many funders' minds, the budget shows the applicant's most creative and serious thinking about tackling a specific problem using limited resources.

Whereas your goals may be the heart of your proposal, the budget is the engine, the force which is going to impress upon a funder that you will be a quality recipient for its money. A poor budget can sink a well-written proposal, whereas a mediocre text can be saved by an excellent budget that gives the funder an excellent value for a program it is seeking to support.

A budget should be your first priority after you decide to invest your time in submitting a proposal to a funder. Since the budget reflects everything you propose to do in your program, the budget should be constantly reviewed and edited throughout the proposal development process.

The first question as you launch your efforts is, "Can I afford the time to develop this proposal?" Make a rough budget. If the amount of funds is enough to make the pursuit worthwhile, go for it. If not, stop. One of the most important decision an organization can make is **NOT** to develop a proposal. Proposals take valuable time and resources to develop; make informed decisions about which ones you can afford to pursue.

Five hints to building a competitive budget can be remembered by the handy acronym GRANT:

- **Get the Guidelines;**
- **Ready Your Resources (redux);**
- **Adhere to Actual Costs and Add It Up (correctly);**
- **Name the Donation**
- **Take The Truth Test**

Get the Guidelines: Most funders, whether they specifically mention their guidelines to you or not, have guidelines for proposal budgets. Usually, guidelines include:

- a range of money you can ask for (e.g. \$20,000 - \$50,000);
- a time frame (e.g. two-year program);
- an allowable administration amount (e.g. 20% of total costs); and
- an allowable *overhead* or *indirect cost* amount (e.g. 10% of total direct costs);
- limits for certain expenses (e.g. a maximum stipend for teachers = \$50 per day for up to 5 days at the training workshop);

Each funder also has items which are fundable (e.g. a publication), sometimes not fundable (e.g. equipment), and definitely not fundable (e.g. funds entirely for overhead expenses). You

must read and obey the rules very carefully to avoid both wasting your time with a funder that is of no use to you, and disqualifying your proposal because you did not follow the rules. In short, find the guidelines, read the guidelines, and follow the guidelines.

That said, guidelines are guidelines, not the laws of physics – often there is a little room for negotiations if a funder really wants to give money to your program, but wants further clarification on your budget numbers or wants you to make adjustments to your budget. So, whereas your budget numbers should be as close to what you actually want (and need!), these initial numbers are not always the final numbers you will use in a contract with a funder. Be prepared to negotiate.

Ready Your Resources (redux): Similar to the narrative, use technology to your advantage. Clarity is the ultimate goal of any proposal writer and the budget is no exception. Neatness counts with budgets, both in terms of format and readability. Use spreadsheet software to calculate your costs and display your work in easy-to-read columns and rows. Strive for simplicity. Do not let the proposal reviewer become lost as he or she checks your figures or searches for justification for your expenses. Use underlines, shading, bold text, and colors sparsely, so that your numbers are the main focus of the budget. Make sure the budget copies well and comes through a fax or e-mail cleanly. Use equally-spaced, "sans-serif" fonts big enough to read.

Adhere to Actual Costs and Add It Up (correctly): Each number in the budget should be there for a reason and it should reflect an actual cost. Both overestimates and underestimates can harm you. Overestimates of certain expenses can look as though you are trying to deceive the funder, and can take funds away from other expenses you have underestimated, if the proposal is funded. Underestimating expenses will also look as if you are trying to mislead the funder, and an underestimation can severely hamper the implementation of your program, if it is eventually funded. Research your expenses and use quality numbers that you can justify. If your program is funded, your budget eventually becomes your contract with a funder, so use figures you that reflect your real needs. Don't sell yourself short, but don't get greedy-- funders can spot an excessively padded budget easily.

A typical budget has three components: a table of numbers representing currency amounts requested, *calculations* or *formulas* describing how these amounts were generated, and words, called the *justification* or *narrative*, describing the reason for the request. The sample budgets attached show three different ways to organize these three budget components. Often, a funder will tell you how it wants to see the information organized.

No matter how you organize your budget, make sure you carefully and clearly explain the logic behind each number you have in your budget. Even seemingly "obvious" requests, such as "Supplies = \$50," for example, should be explained in more detail. As a rule, the larger the specific request, the more explaining you should do. It is also a good idea to clearly explain request for funds for technical support, which may arise in iEARN programs. For example, many funders do not have a lot of experience with Internet/electronic network costs, so make your case for funds strong.

Remember: if you are not able to justify a request for funds for a certain expense, you should change the amount requested or remove it from your budget. Poorly justified requests tell a funder that your budget and your overall program is poorly conceived. Make a strong case for each dollar (or peso, ruble, etc.) you request.

And, please, MAKE SURE YOUR NUMBERS ADD UP CORRECTLY!

Name the Donation: An important step of developing a budget for a proposal for a funding source which requires the organization to contribute resources to the program is securing these resources, which are called *matching funds*, *a match*, or *cost-sharing*. The match can be *cash* or *in-kind services or donations* that your organization contributes to the program. The match may be from other grants, as well. Commonly, an organization must commit to a certain level of match (usually a percentage of the funds solicited), and this commitment is typically shown item-by-item or by *line-item* in the proposal budget. Most often, a funder that requires a match will seek a guarantee that your contribution is secured or will be easily secured before it gives you a grant. Thus, you must secure the match and demonstrate to the funding source that you have this match when the proposal is submitted.

Sometimes a funder will request a cash-only match. Other times, the funder will let you know which items it does not consider appropriate for a match, such as rental costs of office equipment or office space already leased by the organization for general office use. Common matches include:

- Cash and stock;
- Airline, rail, bus, theatre, museum tickets
- computers, printers, monitors, software, digital cameras, Internet service
- Books, manuals, and office supplies;
- translating and interpreting services;
- discounts on printing & publishing;
- coupons for food & beverage;
- group discounts for workshops & conference lodging;
- home-stays;
- promotional items & giveaways for conference participants;
- accounting & financial services donations; and
- free advertisement space on television, radio, or in print media.

Usually, an organization does not put a value on many items which are donated to the program and which are quite appropriate as matches. Some donations, such as home-stays, for example, are often not given a monetary value, although they are an important cost-share. These types of cost-sharing will need to be given an estimated value, such as \$50 per day, based upon previous experience or an agreed upon standard with the organization or profession. You can include time donated to the program by volunteers who offer professional services pertinent to the program. For example, the value of the time donated from a parent who is a computer technician and who gives a group of students a seminar in network management can be calculated as a cost-share. Putting a value on every component of your program not only helps increase your match, it helps you understand the "true" cost of the services your program provides.

There are several ways to show match in a budget. [Sample Budgets A \(one-year\) & B \(two-year\)](#) use a three-column approach (funds requested, match, total (requested plus match)). [Sample Budget C \(three-year\)](#) uses bolded numbers to denote the contribution from the soliciting organization. No matter the format used, you should have support documentation from contributors stating the amount of cash or equipment or type of service they will give to the program.

Take The Truth Test: Last, but not least, ask yourself, "Can we really afford to run this program if we get the money?" Hundreds of grants have been given to organizations for programs, which instead of helping them, hurt them by draining their resources, putting unwanted burdens on already-overburdened staff, and forcing them to redirect their efforts in a way they were not expecting when they applied for the funds several months beforehand. It is very difficult not to submit a proposal once you have invested hundreds of hours of staff time into it, but this may be one of the most important decisions you make. Not only do you not want to submit a lackluster proposal to a funder, but you also do not want to submit an excellent proposal to a funder at the wrong time.

Developing a proposal costs time and money – make sure the program is one you can afford. Check your budget and ask yourself again and again, "Is this worth our efforts?" If no, do not put your organization in an unfavorable position. If yes, then submit your budget and proposal with confidence. And, good luck!

Sample Budgets

The attached sample budget templates have been used for iEARN-US proposals. These templates use representative budget items and figures for three fictional iEARN training programs. The following scenarios created below help illustrate how one addresses certain funder guidelines in a budget.

Sample Budget A

The funder offers grants up to \$25,000 for a one-year training program for secondary school educators in new Internet technologies. The guidelines state that:

- 1) Proposals with administrative expenses more than 20% are less competitive;
- 2) Indirect costs may not exceed 10% and are considered administrative expenses;
- 3) Program expenses should be broken out into *general program expenses* and *participant program expenses* (expenses that change with the number of participants);
- 4) The cost per participant should not exceed \$500;
- 5) Using professional trainers from the United States is encouraged to promote cross-cultural exchange;
- 6) The funder will provide a dollar-for-dollar match to an applicant's contributions, which can be cash or in-kind donations; and
- 7) No funds may be requested for equipment, Web sites, computer maintenance, or staff travel.

Sample Budget B

The funder offers grants from \$50,000 - \$100,000 for two-year training and curriculum development programs for secondary school educators in new Internet technologies. Budget guidelines state that:

- 1) Proposals with administrative expenses should not exceed 20%;
- 2) Indirect costs may not exceed 10% of direct costs;
- 3) Expenses should be broken out into program categories and include a summary;
- 4) 100 schools and 100 educators should participate in the program;
- 5) An applicants should match the funder at 25% with cash or in-kind donations; and
- 6) Funds may be requested for equipment, Web site development, network maintenance, staff travel, and operating expenses.

Sample Budget C

The funder offers grants from approximately \$10,000 - \$30,000 per year up to three years for training programs for secondary school educators in new Internet technologies. Budget guidelines state that competitive proposals will show:

- 1) Reasonable salary expenses and benefits for program staff;
- 2) Indirect costs that do not exceed 10% of direct costs;
- 3) Expenses in the seven categories: Salaries; Benefits; Travel; Equipment; Materials & Supplies; Consultants & Contracts; and Other Expenses;
- 4) A Budget Summary and Budget Justification for each expense is required; and
- 5) A t least a 25% match is requested (cash or in-kind donations are acceptable);

Supporting Material

An important component to the proposal is the supporting materials attached at the end of your proposal, sometimes as appendices. Examples of common supporting materials include:

- *Résumés, CVs, and Bios.* Keep to 1 to 2 pages in length, unless otherwise instructed. Include CVs for only key program staff. ([Sample CVs 1, 2, 3 and 4](#); [sample bios](#).);
- *Letters of support.* Keep to 1 to 2 pages in length for each partner and a selection of participants. Show support from businesses, NGOs, foundations, school districts, Ministries of Education, and other important partners. ([Sample letters of support 1, 2, 3 and 4](#).);
- *Media Coverage.* A sample newspaper or magazine article is a good attachment, especially if it has images that break the monotony of all the letters and numbers you are presenting a funder. Make it brief, though. ([Sample press releases 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5](#).);
- *Examples of Past Programs.* If you are requesting funds for a workshop, for example, then it may be beneficial to include an agenda of a past workshop to show the funder your experience. ([Sample iEARN workshop agenda](#).); and
- *Financial & Legal Documents.* The funder will commonly ask for specific documents, such as tax exempt status, NGO registration, a list of the board of directors, annual report, certification of compliance with government policies, or an audit statement. Submit the requested documents in order at the end of your proposal.

Supporting materials are generally used to make sure the applicant is experienced, legal, and financially solvent. *Take care only to include materials that the funder wants to see.* Videos, publications, and other materials are often annoying for a funder to receive. Less is better than more. If your proposal captures the interest of a funder, it can also ask for more information.

Submitting The Proposal

Read the requirements for submitting your proposal carefully. Faxed or e-mail copies of proposals are rarely accepted. Deadlines are strictly observed and proposals that do not arrive in time are usually rejected immediately. Allow enough time for the proposal to reach the funder before the closing date for submissions. Keep a record of your proposal and make sure you receive a verification of receipt by the funder.

Make as many copies as the funder instructs you to provide. Pay attention to instructions such as “do not bind” or “do not staple.” Sometimes, electronic versions of the proposal are requested on ASCII formatted disks. If you have any questions about how or what to submit, contact the program or grants officer designated to assist you, but do not contact this person at the last minute!

Plan your submission as you have written the narrative and composed the budget: with care. Do not disappoint your staff and partners, who have toiled for weeks to produce this excellent proposal, by missing a deadline or sending the proposal to a wrong address.

After the proposal is submitted, do not forget about it! Most funders will give you a date by which they hope to inform you of their decision. Make them keep their word. Feel free to contact the funder if their announcement of grantees deadline has passed. You do not want to pester the funder, but at the same time you want to make sure they know you regard your proposal submission as a significant investment to be looked after.

Resources

The following are handy U.S.-based links for proposal writers. Bookmark the links you feel you may want to check monthly for updates and new opportunities.

The Foundation Center

<http://fdncenter.org/>

The Grantmanship Center

<http://www.tgci.com/intl/index.asp>

National Network of Grantmakers

<http://www.fdncenter.org/onlib/cga/nng.html>

Proposal Writing Short Courses

The Foundation Center

<http://fdncenter.org/learn/shortcourse/prop1.html>

A Guide to Proposal Planning and Writing (from Oryx Press)

<http://www.oryxpress.com/miner.htm>

Help with Grant Proposals (from Oryx Press)

<http://nonprofit.about.com/cs/cs/helpwithgrants/index.htm>

Consulting Fees for Grant Proposal Writing:

An Exchange of Ideas and Information from TGCI-Forum

<http://nonprofit.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.tgci.com%2Fpublications%2F98winter%2Fconsultfee.htm>

Sample Foundation Application & Guidelines

Carnegie Corporation of New York

<http://www.carnegie.org/sub/program/grant.html>

Ford Foundation

<http://www.fordfound.org/about/guideline.cfm>

David and Lucile Packard Foundation

<http://www.WKKF.org/HowToApply/Default.asp>

Surdna Foundation

<http://www.igc.org/surdna/apply.html#apply>

Turner Foundation

<http://www.turnerfoundation.org/turner/application.html>

W. K. Kellogg Foundation

<http://www.WKKF.org/HowToApply/Default.asp>

Request for Proposals Sites & Links (US Government)

The Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/GrantApps/>

Request for Grant Proposals, U.S. Department of State Bureau of Cultural and Educational Affairs

<http://exchanges.state.gov/education/rfgps/menu.htm>

United States Agency for International Development (training, technical assistance, relief)
http://www.info.usaid.gov/procurement_bus_opp/procurement/

Federal Programs & Grants (Distance Education focus)
<http://www.adec.edu/fed-pgms.html>

Conclusion

Remember, the best way to become good at developing proposals is to develop proposals. Read application guidelines to keep up-to-date on funder priorities and strategies. Collect and read successful proposals to get a sense of what is being funded and how organization like yours are finding the funds they need to sustain their good work and to grow stronger.

Also keep in mind that competition is fierce for grant monies. Unfortunately, most proposals are not funded. In fact, some successful proposal writers only achieve success 20% of the time. In other words, it is possible that four out of five proposals you submit to funders will be turned down. Do not take it personally if you do not capture all the grants for which you compete. Learn, revise, and persevere.

Good luck with your proposals and happy hunting!

Glossary

BID—a proposal submitted for funding.

DIRECT COSTS—expenses that are directly billed to the program, as opposed to indirect costs or overhead.

FUNDEE (DONEE)—The recipient of a grant.

FUNDER (DONOR)—An individual or organization that makes a grant or contribution to a donee.

FUNDING CYCLE—the annual schedule funders use to award grants.

FUND-RAISER—Generally an individual operating either as an independent or as a member of a professional firm specializing in fund-raising counsel, who is engaged under contract with a client organization to provide direction, counsel and management of its fund-raising operations.

GUIDELINES—Procedures set forth by a funder that grantseekers should follow when submitting a proposal.

IN-KIND CONTRIBUTION—A contribution of equipment, supplies, or other tangible

MATCHING FUNDS (MATCH)—A donation that is made on condition it be matched within a certain period, either on a one-to-one basis or in accordance with some other formula; also donations by a business matching a donation by one of its employees.

NGO—a Non-Governmental Organization that provides services in a country to those who need assistance. Many iEARN centers worldwide are NGOs, while others are managed by government ministries. The development of NGOs is a high priority for most funders.

OBJECTIVE—The specific purposes for which a campaign or development program is mounted, encompassing the full scope of the stated needs.

OVERHEAD (INDIRECT COSTS)—the term for the basic operating expenses of an organization. Commonly, these expenses include rent, telecommunications, copying, shipping, depreciation of equipment and office furniture, insurance, taxes, audits and bookkeeping. Grants for programs usually allow some small percentage of funds to be used for these general office expenses. resource, as distinguished from a monetary grant. Some organizations may also donate the use of space or staff time as an in-kind contribution.

PROPOSAL—A carefully-prepared written request for a gift or grant.

RFP—a Request For Proposals. This is the name of the formal solicitation from a funder that is looking for organizations to apply for grants.

SOLICITATION—The process of asking for contributions.

[For more glossary terms, please visit CSC Non-Profit Resource Center
<http://home.attbi.com/~cscunningham/glossary.htm>]