

Proposal Writing Tips

- Know your audience – in general, you’ll be writing for a non-academic audience. The reader/reviewer may know very little about what you do. Foundation boards are made up of people with diverse backgrounds.
- Be concise – the reviewer will usually have to read many, many proposals, so say what you need to in the most direct way.
- Aim for an emotional connection through the words.
- Create excitement and hope – paint a picture of your project that they can get excited about.
- Convince the reader of the impact and significance of the project.
- Create a tone that exudes confidence:
 - ✓ Avoid statements of probability or conditional tenses.
 - ✓ Avoid hyperbole.
 - ✓ Concentrate on details.
 - ✓ Write in the 3rd person – objective, balanced.
 - ✓ Don’t include speculation and unplanned visions.
- Use an advisory committee made up of appropriate community members, project personnel, consultants and/or potential program recipients.
 - ✓ Begin meeting with committee members well in advance of deadline.
 - ✓ Do plenty of brainstorming before writing.
 - ✓ If you use a committee and several people provide input into the proposal, make sure one person pulls it all together and edits so that it appears one person wrote the proposal.
- Have two or more people not involved with the project review a draft of the proposal before submitting it to the granting agency. Listen to their suggestions and rewrite accordingly – we can get way “too close” to our own projects.