FUNDRAISING MANUAL

WRITING A PROJECT PROPOSAL
OR
HOW TO GET THE FUNDING YOU WANT FOR YOUR PROJECT

DWDE

DISABILITY WORKSHOP DEVELOPMENT ENTERPRISE

Writing a Project Proposal or

How to get the funding you want for your Project

Introduction

Imagine the situation.

You are very good with your hands and make beautiful wire sculptures. Your sculptures are very popular with tourists. One of your clients has placed a big order for wire soccer balls for the 2010 world cup. You can see that this order is too big for you to deal with on your own. You will need help. You ask around your community and someone suggests you speak to Sam, who is very good with his hands. You go to see Sam, who is permanently disabled and in a wheelchair. He tells you he has other disabled friends who are also good with their hands. You see that something very good can come out of this. You can create employment and improve the lives of disabled people in your community. However, you will have to train the people to work with the wire. Now you need a place to work from and transport for your new workers.

You don't see how you can afford to do this. Your uncle tells you that you can get money for your project from the government. All you have to do is send them a project proposal asking for funding.

The idea of writing a proposal for funding can seem very scary. You may feel that this is something you are not able to do. But this is not the case.

This manual has been written with the aim of guiding you through the process of preparing and presenting a project proposal in a professional and business-like manner.

What is a Project Proposal

Put simply, a Project Proposal is a document that is given to a potential donor to ask them to help finance your project.

There are many projects out there looking for funding. Potential donors receive proposals daily from people asking for money.

How do you make sure your proposal is given the consideration it deserves?

By making sure your plan is well prepared and contains all the information the person will need to know about you and your organisation.

You proposal must say:

- ❖ **Who**: Who you are and who will benefit from the project

- ❖ **Why**: Why you are planning this project and why do you need funding

- ❖ **What**: What you hope to achieve by developing this project, not just for yourself but for the people whose lives you hope to improve

- ❖ **Where**: Where the project will be based

- ❖ **When**: When the project will begin, if it hasn't already started

- ❖ **How**: How you are going to make this project a success.

It is important that you spend some time thinking about these points. Write them down. This will be your guideline in helping you to achieve your goals, your **action plan**. It will also form the basis of your proposal.

What does it mean?
Action plan: this is your plan to make sure you achieve your goals

A Project Proposal is very similar to a business plan. All successful businesses begin with a business plan. It's like a road map of how you see your business or project growing. It shows potential donors how carefully you have thought through your idea and how you plan to **sustain** it into the future.

What does it mean?
sustain: to make something continue to exist

Where do I begin?

Before you begin writing your proposal you will need to do some research to find out which donor you need to approach. It is a waste of both your time and the donors to prepare a proposal for someone who has no interest in supporting the people you are trying to help.

Before you begin writing you must be:

- ❖ Clear about why and for whom your are writing the proposal
- ❖ Know and understand the donor for whom you are preparing the proposal
- ❖ Know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses.
- ❖ Be able to show that you know how to manage a project. Donors need to know that their money will be managed properly and the project will have a direct impact on the people it is striving to help.

There are different kinds of funding agencies. Each with its own advantages and disadvantages:

Agency	Advantages	Disadvantagtes
Government	Often has a lot of money If your project is line with government strategy it increases the chances of meaningful impact	Can take a long time for your application to be processed The application process can be complicated There is little flexibility in who and how they fund
Churches	Has flexibility in funding Share the development and ethical view of progressive civil organisations	Have to rely on congregation to raising money. This means that funding may be limited and irregular Some churches receive funding money from governments and can be subject to changes in governments policy
Large family foundations	Often have large sums of money to give Professional staff Are society minded and understand the issues and concerns Have clear guidelines on what is funded and the provides a process for applying for funds A willingness to share international experience	Can take a long time for the application to be processed Application process can be complicated May decide to change priorities
Small family foundations	Has the ability to form a close relationship and have a personal	May not have much money Staff not at professional as a large

	commitment to the project Is able to be flexible in choosing which project to fund	family foundation
Major corporate funding	Have large sums of money to give Often have professional staff Are, as a rule, clear on what they want from providing funding. Do not have any hidden agendas	May want a direct involvement in the project May stop funding due to a change in priorities Sensitive to anything that may be seen to harm their business

Once you have chosen which organisation you wish to approach you will need to find out:

- ❖ **Who**: Who is the person that will make the final decision regarding funding. Their contact details, exact title and name, with the correct spelling
- ❖ **Where**: The exact postal and street address of the organisation
- ❖ **Contact details**: The telephone number, fax and e-mail address

It is important to understand what donors want in terms of their own goals, missions and concerns.

Most donors want the following things:

- ❖ To make a difference. They want to see the project they are funding succeed. They want to be seen as being part of that success
- ❖ To feel that they are having an influence in addressing the problems of the world, the country, the community
- ❖ To gain knowledge, insight and understanding
- ❖ To share knowledge, insight and understanding and in doing so add value to the project they are funding

In terms of writing your proposal this means that you have to convince your donor that, by supporting your project, they will be making a positive difference. A difference that they will be proud to be part of.

This is why it is important to choose your potential donor carefully. It is no use sending a proposal for a project which distributes condoms in the fight against aids to a catholic church.

The more you know about the different donors, the easier it will be to choose the donors who will be right for you. This will make writing the proposal easier as you can then present it in a way that will make the donor want to 'buy into your project'.

Before you write your Proposal

Any proposal sent to a donor must be well-packaged and presented.

This involves more research.

You will need to find out from your chosen donor:

- ❖ The correct contact details. This can usually be found out from the switchboard or donors web-page.
- ❖ The special areas of interest. This can generally be found on a web-page.
- ❖ The size of grant the donor usually gives. It's no use going to a local church organisation, for example, asking for R500,000 to build a workshop.
- ❖ What the decision-making process is and how long before you can expect an answer.
- ❖ The dates/deadlines when proposals must be submitted by.
- ❖ Whether the donor has any guidelines for proposal format that you should follow. Some donors prefer to see a short preliminary proposal first.

Try to get this information directly from the person you will be writing the proposal for, either by telephone or in a meeting. This is your first step in building a relationship with your donor, so it is important that it goes well!

What else do I need to know?

As we said earlier it is important to know yourself and your mission for your project.

When you approach someone for funding you are trying to 'sell' yourself and your project. It is important that you present yourself as a '**good risk**'.

What does it mean?
Good risk: likely to succeed

Knowing yourself

In order to sell yourself and your project to a donor you must know yourself. It can help to write down the following:

❖ Who you are: your strengths, weaknesses; what you have achieved; your past work experiences. This is known as a SWOT analysis. An example of a SWOT analysis is shown below.

Strengths	Weaknesses
Experienced and committed to the project	Not good at dealing with people
Opportunities	**Threats**
Government supports the type of work the project does	Government is already supporting several other projects in your area

Knowing your project

In the same way as it is important to know yourself you must also know your project. Potential donors are going to want to know:

- ❖ The overall mission and goal of your project. Why it exists, who it will benefit.
- ❖ Any well-respected and well-known people who are connected with your project.
- ❖ If you have a board of governors, who they are.
- ❖ Main staff and volunteers who help to make the project work.
- ❖ Biographies of the people who have benefitted from the project.
- ❖ How the project is managed.
- ❖ The objectives of the project

If you had access to the money you are asking for, would you fund your project?

This is a good question to ask yourself before you put pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. If you are in any doubt about your proposal then this needs to be dealt with now.

Writing the proposal

So you've done your pre-proposal work. You have a list of potential donors and are now ready to get down to work.

Your proposal document should be made up of the following:

Title Page

The aim of the title page is to capture, in a short sentence, the essence of the project, for example:

'The Masi Wireworks Project – enabling the physically disabled to achieve their full potential'

The title page must also say:

- ❖ The name of the agency to whom the proposal is being submitted
- ❖ Name, address, telephone no, email address of your organisation, if possible, with a logo. If you have a web address, include this too.
- ❖ Name of the contact person who will be able to discuss the proposal and their contact details
- ❖ Date
- ❖ Fundraising no. of your organisation
- ❖ Title of the project

Contents page

The contents page lists the main headings in the proposal and pages numbers.

Covering letter

The covering letter briefly describes the content of the proposal. It should be written in a simple, straightforward manner and get to the point. Do not make it sound like a begging letter. It should be signed by the director of the project.

Introduction

The introduction should state:

- ❖ The aims and objectives of your project
- ❖ The date your project began
- ❖ The people the project helps

This is a good place to include any **statistics** you may have that can support your proposal.

What does it mean?
Statistics: a set of numbers which represent facts or measurements.

Main body of the proposal

This is where you do your main selling job. This is where you persuade the donor that your project is necessary and worthwhile.

To help it easier think of dividing this section into various sub-headings.

The Problem Statement

The problem statement is where you describe the essence of your project and should include the following:

- ❖ What the current situation is.
- ❖ Who the project is going to help.
- ❖ What your organisation feels would be a way of addressing the problems by using its current expertise. For example, if we go back to our wireworks project in the introduction, the project will be addressing unemployment and poverty issues amongst the physically disabled.

❖ Why is this a good way to go
❖ How this project will impact on the members of the project, their families and the community. For example, Sam begins working at the wireworks project and earns enough money to send his teenage son back to school to achieve his matric.
❖ The overall cost of the project

Main Proposal

This is where you get to 'sell' your organisation. Potential donors want to know why your organisation is the best one to address the identified problem. This part of your proposal should not be overlong, about 5 pages maximum.

In this section you will state:

❖ Why should the donor give money to your organisation and not another one.
❖ Why should the donor consider your proposal at all?
❖ Provide reasons why your organisation is approaching the problem in this way.
❖ **Motivate** why your organization will get results. Use your track record of past projects to help convince the donor that you can be trusted. Talk about what qualifies you and your organisation to take on such a project.

What does it mean?
Motivate: to be the reason why someone does something.

❖ Describe the objective of the project, the results you hope to achieve and how much it will cost.
❖ Indicate the benefits for the people the project will be targeted at helping. For example, alleviation of poverty, an increase in self-esteem, teaching of new skills, involvement of the community, a decrease in crime. A potential donor will be interested in finding out how the project will increase knowledge, whether it can be used as a model for other projects and, if you are applying for government funding whether or not it fits in with national or local government focus areas.
❖ How you intend to operate the project or how it is operating. Donors like to know who the people are who will be responsible for the project. Provide a brief history of the people involved, their qualifications, experience and previous experience in similar projects.

❖ What opportunities and benefits there are for the donor. The donor will be interested to know whether the project has any implications for a similar project in another area. For example, a project aimed at providing community care for AIDS orphans in a poor area of a major city could help other people in another part of the world learn from this experience This is where it is important to know your donor as then you can concentrate on the areas they will be interested.

❖ How you intend to **evaluate** the project to ensure the objectives are being met.

What does it mean?
evaluate: to judge how good or successful something is.

Donors want to know which technique you intend to use for evaulation, how often you will be evaluating the project, who will be doing the evaluating and whether or not they will be from your organisation (most donors prefer to have someone who is not part of the organisation doing the evaluating.

The budget

This is where you state what you are requesting from the agency and why. You will need to follow this statement up with a realistic description of your organisations projected income and expenses over a period of time.

This should be explained under the following headings:

- ❖ Operational expenses. How much it costs to run the project. The operational expenses are a percentage of the total operational expenses. Most donors prefer to fund at least 7% of total operational expenses.
- ❖ Capital expenses. How much it costs set up the project
- ❖ Cost expenses. This will cover costs such as rent, transport, telephone, etc.
- ❖ Income. Specify how much money the project will generate. This is important as you need to show the donor that the project is financially sustainable. Donors want to know that their money will be put to good use and that if, for any reason they have to withdraw funding, the project will be able to continue supporting itself.

Please do not be afraid to ask for help for this section of the proposal. Contact other organisations or a person qualified in this field to help you prepare an accurate report on the costs of the project.

The conclusion

The conclusion provides a summary of what you are saying and asking. This is the part where all the previous information is drawn together and states:

- ❖ Why the project is necessary
- ❖ Why yours is the right organisation to run the project
- ❖ Why the donor should consider the proposal from their point of view
- ❖ What could be achieved

Appendices

The appendices is where you include additional documents and technical information that are best kept separate from the main document.

These are:

- ❖ The annual report
- ❖ The detailed budget
- ❖ The most recent audited statement
- ❖ Photographs illustrating the project and beneficiaries of the project
- ❖ A detailed technical description of the project

❖ A detailed **timeline**

What does it mean?
timeline: a plan for when things will happen or how long you think something will take.

❖ Any relevant evaluation reports
❖ Additional information about the people involved where there is not enough in the Annual Report

Number your appendices and list them on the contents page.

Bibliography and references

A bibliography is a list of published material you may have used in your proposal. This should be kept short. It is there to ensure any facts you have mentioned are backed up by credible sources. Include:

❖ Name of the author(s) and organisation producing the publication.
❖ Name of the publication
❖ Date of the publication, and
❖ Publisher

Some do's and don'ts

Now you have all the information you need for your proposal let's look at what to do and what not to do.

Do:

❖ Make contact with a "real' person and address the proposal to him or her. Make sure of the correct spelling of their name and their title.
❖ Plan ahead so that your proposal isn't rushed
❖ Show that you know about similar projects in your field
❖ Ask someone else to edit your proposal

- ❖ Explain any acronyms
- ❖ Make it no longer than 10 pages, less if possible
- ❖ Show that you are passionate about your work
- ❖ Write it as a human being, don't worry about it not being academic enough
- ❖ Write simply and avoid jargon
- ❖ Use short sentences
- ❖ Use the active rather than passive voice for example, "specially trained staff will be running the project."
- ❖ Check for spelling and grammar mistakes. Ask someone else to read it through and mark any errors
- ❖ Revise and rewrite if necessary
- ❖ Do tell the truth
- ❖ Use headings and sub-headings and make sure they are all the same throughout the document
- ❖ Number your pages
- ❖ Check that you have bound or stapled your document in the right order
- ❖ Space the text nicely
- ❖ Use an easy to read font

Don't:

- ❖ Take a 'one subject fits all' approach. Do your homework and fit your proposal to your donor
- ❖ 'Pad' your budget to include things that are not used in the project
- ❖ Hide information
- ❖ Send too much documentation
- ❖ Assume that the donor knows all about you, so you don't bother to present yourself well
- ❖ Use jargon

What does it mean?
Jargon: words or expressions that may be used by a groups of people which may be difficult for other people to understand.

- ❖ Make the project fit the donor at the expense of what you feel needs to be done.

Finally

Once you have submitted your project follow-up by checking that they have received the proposal. Once you have done this be prepared to sit back and wait.

Some government agencies have hundreds of proposals to read through.

From time to time follow up with a phone call or in writing. Always keep the tone polite. Do not become demanding or aggressive. The donor does not owe you anything.

If your proposal is rejected find out the reasons for the rejection. It may be that:

- ❖ The donor does not have sufficient funds available at this time

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❖ Your proposal does not meet the donors criteria
❖ The proposal is not seen as a priority at this moment in time
❖ For some reason, the proposal does not impress the person it was sent to.

This is important as the more you know about the reasons for refusal, the less likely you are to make the same mistake again.

If your proposal is accepted then *Well Done*! But this is just the beginning. Now you need to work at building a relationship with your donor.

First of all:

❖ Thank the donor in a way that shows you value their committment with your project.
❖ Keep the donor up-to-date with what's happening in your project. Send regular reports, invite them to open days, important events, etc.
❖ Meet the donors requirements for reports. This means providing the right information, in the right format at the right time.
❖ Be available for meetings with the donor. Wherever possible bring donors to meet the people their contributions are helping.
❖ Keep communication open at all times.
❖ Make sure that you provide the donor with what they want from the relationship. Share information, participate in conferences. This ensures that the donor/project relationship becomes a real partnership.
❖ It is important to remember that, by servicing your donors, you create the potential for long-term relationships.

Sample of a project proposal

To summarise, a project proposal should contain the following headings:

❖ **Covering letter**
❖ **Title page**
❖ **Introduction**
❖ **Problem statement**
❖ **Uniqueness of the organization**
❖ **Objectives**
❖ **Expected benefits**
❖ **Operational plan**

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- ❖ **Personnel**
- ❖ **Evaluation**
- ❖ **The budget**
- ❖ **Attachments**

Draw up your proposal document using these headings on a single page. You can then insert your information below each heading.

Remember to do your research first, keep the language simple and provide all the documents the donor will want to see.

Above all, if you believe in what you are doing this will show in your proposal.

Good luck!