

HOW TO PREPARE A GOOD PROPOSAL

NGOs and Projects: How do we change things?

Non-profit organizations or citizen initiatives are active subjects, frequently with very clear visions on how to alleviate global or local problems. To be successful, it is necessary to work in steps: to be able to realize, what we want and to be able to achieve milestones in our work.



Project: What does it mean?

When we speak about a **project**, we see it as:

- a **complex document**, which describes our intentions to change situations
- **plan**, what do we want to change and how do we change it?
- **practical road map** which steers us through the land of problems
- **persuasive material** to gain the money, called a **proposal**

A good project projects planned intentions and measures, through which we can achieve a goal (a change).

"A project is a temporary endeavor with a defined beginning and end (usually time-constrained, and often constrained by funding or deliverables), undertaken to meet unique goals and objectives, typically to bring about beneficial change or added value."¹

¹ See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_management

Why We Write Projects

In order to prepare a good project, we have to be clear, understandable and attractive, because through projects we:

- present our ideas to donors or grant committees,
- address our public or stakeholders,
- attract interest of the media and public,
- manage simple or complicated processes.

Many people see projects only as a door to receive funding, but the most important purpose of a project is achieving specific change in a certain area.

Project Management Process: Overview

Projects put together all we know and plan in a clear format.

Not only is a **project proposal** (written document) important, but **project delivery** is also crucial. It is important to plan and implement specific steps of the project in a certain order. **Project management** is the discipline of planning, organizing, motivating, and controlling resources (people, time, budget), to achieve specific goals.

As Allan Chapman² states, in the project management process you have to:

1. **Agree to precise specifications** for the project - 'Terms of Reference'
2. **Plan the project** - time, team, activities, resources, financials - using suitable project management tools.
3. **Communicate the project plan to your project team** - and to any other interested people and groups.
4. **Agree and delegate** project actions.
5. **Manage and motivate** - inform, encourage, enable the project team.
6. **Check, measure, monitor, review project progress** - adjust project plans, and inform the project team and others.

² See: www.businessballs.com

7. **Complete project** - review and report on project performance; give praise and thanks to the project team.
8. **Project follow-up** - train, support, measure and report results and benefits.

How to Write a Successful Proposal

Written projects we call a **proposal**: There are two groups of people who will use this proposal:

1. **You as an organization** which is trying to get the money for the project. Once approved, proposals will guide you in your work.
2. **Grant committee or donors** who have a certain strategy to use the money. They look for **clear and attractive projects** which will persuade them that their funding will be well invested. The donors usually have to read many proposals (e.g. 30, 40, 50 projects in one week). Be as **short, clear and understandable as possible**. Do not write about your hopes – indicate concrete steps you will take to achieve the change, so that the reader will understand and believe in your vision and capability. Explain why the steps are necessary and why your organization is the best one to realize the project. If you present a good analysis of the situation, clear vision, realistic objectives and an appropriate budget, you may have a good chance at being awarded funding.

Structure of the Proposal

The structure of the proposal can vary according to different grant schemes, but there are certain parts which have to be included in every project proposal.

Basic information



Name, experience, realized projects – introduction to your organization. All necessary key information for the donor.

Project summary

Short description of the project (5 lines). Offers basic description which expresses the real value of your project;



explains uniqueness and impact of your project. Include the name of the project.

Time and location



Sets the frame of the project.

How long will the project last?

When will it start?

Where is it located?

Situation analyses



What is the situation we would like to change?

What are the symptoms (visible signs) and what are the sources of the situation?

Why do we consider it bad and want to change it? (You can use SWOT analysis, stakeholder analysis, etc.)

Goals / Objectives



What do we want to achieve?

What change do we want to see at the end of the project?

Based on the analysis, how do we want to influence the situation?

Target groups



Who will participate in our project?

Who will cooperate with us?

Who will be influenced by our project?

Who will benefit directly, indirectly – as primary or secondary target group...?

Proposed solution



What activities will we realize to achieve the change?

Education? Networking? Campaign? Creating a community center? Study tour? Other?

How do these activities change the situation?

Time plan



Time vs. activities: what will be time sequence of the activities?

How logically and realistically will the activities be organized?

Team and responsibilities



Who will be members of the project team?

Who will be responsible for what (coordinating, media work and public relations, work with volunteers, finances, project management, etc...)?

Outputs / Outcomes



What shall we see at the end of the project (tangible, visible, durable)?

- *Trained people*
- *Built gardens*
- *Printed materials*
- *Organized workshops, trainings, public fora...?*

What change will we see (changed system, behavior of people, etc...?)

Budget



What resources will we need to implement the project?

How will they be allocated to specific activities?

What will be our input of work, expressed in money?

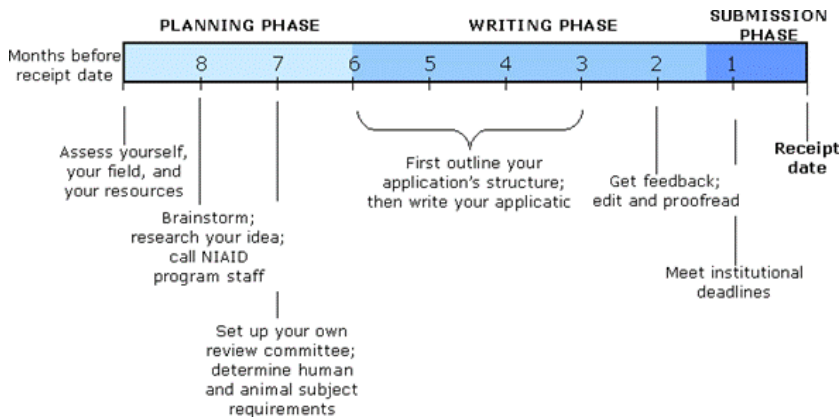
Graph of a proposal can look like pyramid, where main proposal sections are individually elaborated:



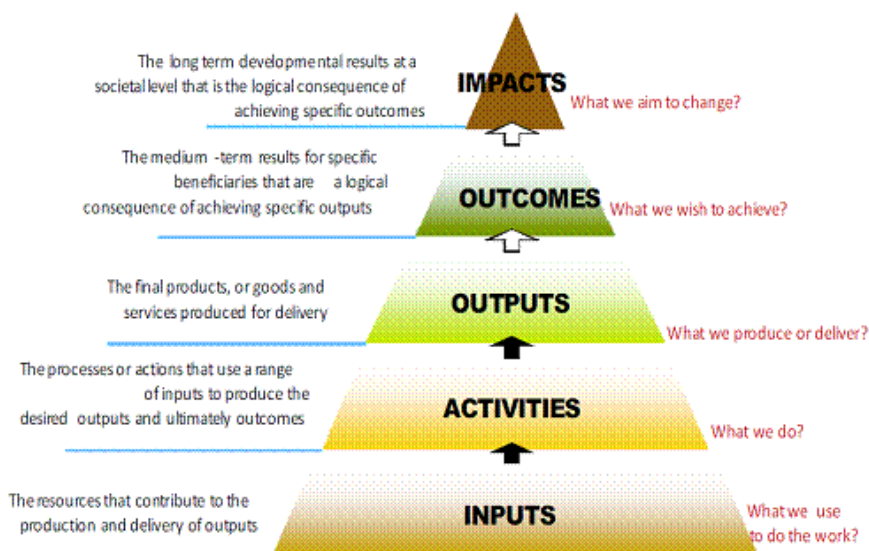
Another (slightly different) structure of a proposal:

Part of a project	Content of the part	Pages
Executive Summary	Umbrella statement of your case and summary of the entire proposal	1
Statement of Need	Why this project is necessary	2
Project Description	Nuts and bolts of how the project will be implemented and evaluated	3
Budget	Financial description of the project plus explanatory notes	1
Organization Information	History and governing structure of the nonprofit; its primary activities, audiences, and services	1
Conclusion	Summary of the proposal's main points	2 par.

Preparing a small project can take a few hours, but writing a big proposal needs extensive preparation and elaboration, which can take several months. In that case it is good to plan the project and its preparation phases very carefully.



The most important aspect of proposal writing is to design and focus your activities in a way that they will realistically lead to change. It is helpful to distinguish between various phases of the project- focus on outcomes, rather than on outputs. The pyramid below shows us how it can work:



To write a good project is an art as well as a craft. If you have a good idea and you are able to translate it into project language, it can help lead you to the changes you envision. Preparing a proposal is the first step.

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