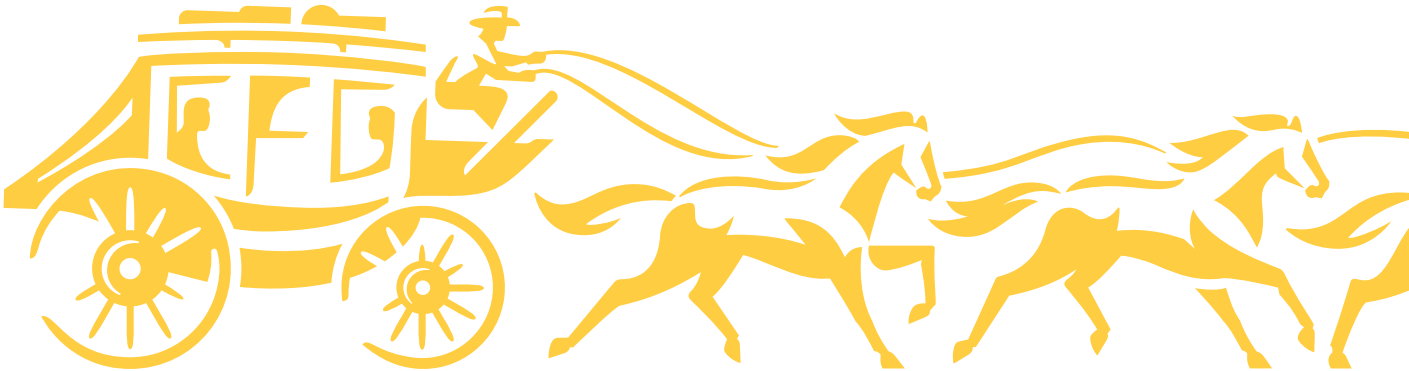




Best practices for writing proposals: How to speak to funders

April 16, 2019
Connie Wright
Senior Vice President and Assistant Director
Housing Philanthropy
Customer and Community Programs



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #1: Get to the point in your cover letter

- What is your mission?
 - Few things are more important than your mission.
 - Make sure:
 - It describes what your organization was created to do.
 - It is clear, concise and to the point. Please no ambiguity
- What is your budget?
 - Be sure to develop a budget that shows all costs associated with your program.
 - Make sure there is a clear cost justification



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #1: Get to the point in your cover letter (cont.)

- How much do you need?
 - Don't be afraid to ask for what you need
 - Don't expect one or two organizations to meet your funding needs. Funders like to see multiple sources of funding so that your organization remains healthy should you lose a few of those sources

- How will the money be used?
 - Does it reflect your mission?
 - Is there a quantifiable investment return?



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #2: Do your homework

- Know what kind of support the funder provides and direct your request accordingly.
 - Research past funding decisions and how they were presented publicly.
 - Check with your Regional Association of Grantmakers (RAG)



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #3: Describe your organization

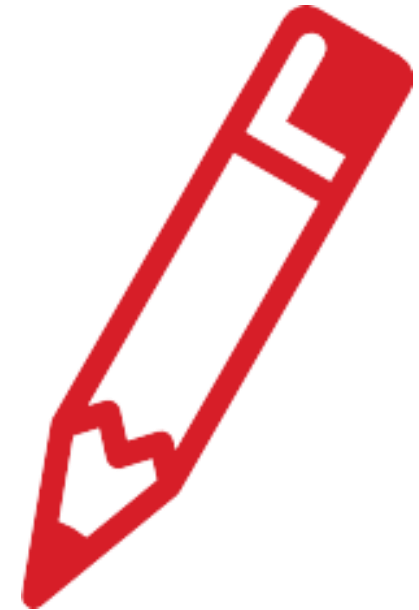
- Give a brief history of your organization
 - Don't tell them where you're going until you've told them where you've been...

Successes:

- What have you accomplished?
- What was the impact to clients?
- What was the impact to the community?

Failures:

- Don't hid misjudgments. State what happened and your response to it.
- Demonstrate you can analyze, measure, and take appropriate action.



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #3: Describe your organization. (cont.)

- What programs or services do they offer?
- What are your program or service objectives?
- What is the number of people and geographic area served?
- How do you measure success?
- Who are your allies in the community?
- Who do you compete against?



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #4: Show your proficiency.

An organization is only as knowledgeable as the staff.

- List your staff and their titles
 - Include summary biographies
- List their job function
 - Staff work experience and skill level should be consistent with the job function
 - Showcase specific contributions made by individuals to
 - Bring the staff list to life.



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #5: Explain why they should fund you.

- Explain your uniqueness.
- Delineate the need and relevance of your programs or services to the audience you serve.
- If there are other organizations with similar mission serving the same population and geography, then distinguish yourself



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #6: Demonstrate fiscal fitness.

- Non-profit organizations should be managed with the same care and considerations as for-profit organizations.
- Provide current year income and expense plan.
- Provide previous fiscal year income and expense actuals (audited if possible)



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #7: Show who's guiding your organization

- List officers and board members
 - The success of any organization is anchored in good solid governance
 - Officers and board members must possess the skills and knowledge necessary to guide the organization
- Provide evidence of long-range plan.
 - Where are you going?
 - How will you get there?



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #8: Provide program information

- Describe your program or project
- Give a timeline for implementation and evaluation
- What is the budget?
- Where is your support coming from?
 - Provide a line item list of proposed and committed sources of funding
- List what type of volunteer contributions are needed for the program or project to be successful, and how you plan to secure this support



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #9: Bring your mission to life

- Include marketing and communications tools:
 - Your annual report.
 - Brochures that describe your programs and services.

- Use images to tell your story: pictures of those who benefit from your work can explain much more than words.



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #10: Building relationships!

- Building relationships with funders is more than lunch!
- Stay on their radar. Make sure funders are aware of your successes and activities.
 - Leave a *BRIEF* message in their voicemail (Do not ask for money at this time).
 - Make sure you include them on your mailing lists and newsletters
 - Send copies of news and other articles that visually demonstrate your mission at work.



Writing a strong proposal

Tip #11: Go the extra mile.

- Go where the funders go.
 - Attend your Regional Association of Grantmakers (RAG) meetings.
 - Seek out opportunities to speak on solutions your organization can provide to specific community needs.
 - Drive the solution not your need!



Writing a strong proposal

Resource Materials

- Getting Funded: A Complete Guide to Proposal Writing.
 - By Mary Hall. 3d. ed. Portland, OR: Portland State University Continuing Education Publications, 1998. (GIC: LB2823/H223/I988)
- A Media Training Guide for Affordable Housing Advocates
 - from The Campaign for Affordable Housing
http://www.tcah.org/pdf/Media_Training_Guide.pdf
- The Giving Forum
(connect with regional associations of grantmakers.)
 - <http://givingforum.org/>
- National Council on Foundations
 - <http://www.cof.org/>





Thank you