



Project for Strengthening Organizations Assisting Refugees Grant Writing 101+: Self-Assess Your Proposal

The current economic situation brings many questions about funding availability. Reduced assets will likely lead grantors to review already highly competitive funding requests with even greater scrutiny than they have in years of plenty. But *your* program is vital to the community that you work with, the program is dependent on your proposal, and you have worked hard on your funding request. Using an assessment tool after your proposal is completed will help to make sure your grant reviewer scores your proposal at the top of the list!

Things to think about when planning a **proposal assessment**:

- ◆ Remember your deadline! Make your assessment more constructive by leaving enough time to set your finished proposal aside for a week before doing the assessment.
- ◆ Make sure you also leave yourself enough time to make the revisions that the assessment suggests.
- ◆ Ask a colleague to assess your proposal as well. If possible, ask someone who has written a funded proposal or who has done grant review work.

Content

- ✓ How closely does your proposal mesh with the mission of the grant giver? (flush out)
- ✓ Have you made statements that need to be referenced? Have you documented and cited your statistics?
- ✓ Is your document filled with field-specific jargon that complicates it for a reader who is not in the same field of service? For example, rather than using the term **resettlement**, say **services which assist with cultural and social service integration for newly arrived refugees**. This may feel cumbersome at first but using plain English language can simplify your proposal so that the reviewer does not have to work to decipher what you are saying.
- ✓ Have you made an assumption that the reviewer is *knowledgeable* or *unfamiliar* with your field? It is important to strike a balance between making general statements which simplify the nature of the organization's work and explaining every single nuance in the working of the program. For example, do not just state that refugees need increased mental health access. Briefly explain the pre and post arrival experiences so that your

reviewer gets a fuller picture of why your services are so essential to your clients as well as the community at large.

- ✓ Have you included graphs or charts that will help paint a picture of the work your organization does?
- ✓ Are your graphs or charts easy to understand? A reviewer should be able to see the point of your graph or chart within 5 seconds.
- ✓ Have you fully explained how the program recipients will benefit from the program?
- ✓ Have you fully quantified the Grantor's "Return on Investment"? In other words, can the grantor easily see how the investment they make will be of value to the foundation? If the funder is seeking publicity, is your work newsworthy? If the funder is seeking to meet the needs a particular ethnicity or age group, does your work serve that population?
- ✓ Is your budget presented in a clear, easy to read, standard accounting format?

Writing Style

- ✓ Is your proposal boring to read, does it lack passion? Use vivid action words that convey your enthusiasm.
- ✓ Write in a positive, strong language that expresses confidence in your organization's ability to do its work. Use terms such as "**will do**" rather than "**can do**" or "**make significant** change in a child's life" rather than "**hopefully better** a child's life".
- ✓ Can the reviewer feel the innovation and unique nature of your proposal, or does it sound like a hundred other proposals and programs?

Cover Letter and Executive Summary

- ✓ Does your title state just the activities you will do or does it briefly include a benefit as well. For example, using a title such as Improving Refugee's Access to Health Care and Health Care Systems through Development of a Refugee Health Program may feel long, but it will generate more initial interest than a title such as Request for Funding for Refugee Health Program.
- ✓ Does your proposal lack a cover letter? The cover letter is essential to setting up how the project will further the grant maker's mission.
- ✓ Does your proposal have an executive summary? The 1 page maximum executive summary should concisely define the WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, and HOW of the funding request.

Problem Statement/Needs Assessment

- ✓ Does your needs statement clearly define what the problem is that you will work to rectify?
- ✓ Have you fully supported the need with statistics? Are the statistics cited?

Objectives

- ✓ Have you included objectives?
- ✓ Are these objectives *realistic*? Read your objectives through the eye of someone who is not familiar with your organization – do other sections of your proposal support your ability to achieve your objectives by showing that you have the staffing, the internal

support, and the local resources to actually accomplish what you say you will accomplish?

- ✓ Are they *measurable*? Can the grantor see that you will be able to show on paper how you are progressing with meeting your objectives?
- ✓ Remember the funder's "Return On Investment". Grantors like to see that you are willing to share information gained from the program. Does your wording indicate a willingness to be open what your organization learns from the project? Can the funder visualize how you might circulate the information to other organizations?
- ✓ Can your program be replicated in other organizations or is it only relevant to your organization? Can your program to increase refugee's access to local mental health services be a template for similar services in other cities or states? Grantors are excited to see that their dollars have the potential for a wider impact.

Qualifications

- ✓ Have you made a direct statement of what skills and knowledge your organization has that qualifies it to successfully do this project?
- ✓ Have you been overly modest about your organization's capability? On the flip side, does it come off as boastful? Striking a balance between the two can be difficult, but it can mean the difference between the reviewer being unsure about your capability or being turned off by what they perceive as arrogance.
- ✓ You have provided an organizational history – Is it short, sweet, and to the point, or do have you told the Complete Unabridged Version? Keep it readable!

Methods

- ✓ Does your proposal show that you will work with or partner with other organizations? Grantors recognize that no organization can do it alone and clients benefit when a teamwork approach is used.
- ✓ Have you proposed a timeline? Is your time line realistic?
- ✓ Have you used a solutions section to show in detail the methodology, scope, and activities that you will use? If you have done this well, the reviewer will see have a mental picture of your program in his or her mind!

Budget

- ✓ Have you presented a *detailed* budget?
- ✓ Have you shown long term funding sources?
- ✓ Is your budget accurate, does it add up, and are the costs realistic?
- ✓ Does your budget show that you have matching money and/or in-kind resources?
- ✓ Have you taken care to ask for only what you will need? Grantors do not take kindly to padded budgets!

Conclusion and Attachments

- ✓ Have you pulled the proposal together with a conclusion paragraph that restates the *amount* that you are requesting along with a short restatement of the *problem, solution, impact, and benefits*?
- ✓ Have you included letters of commitment or support from all partners that you will work with?

- ✓ Have you included all required attachments?
- ✓ Are your attachments clearly labeled?

Information for this tip sheet was gathered from the GrantSAT: Grant Proposal Self-Assessment Tool developed by the U.S. Department of Energy's Carlsbad Office and the Westinghouse Electric Company. The GrantSAT was developed in response to requests from grantees for a tool to self evaluate their grants before they are sent to funders.

The **free** full version of the GrantSAT, complete with the **Self Assessment Tool, a Tabulation Sheet, and an Interpretation Key**, can be found at:

<http://research.uwf.edu/documents/grant-proposal-self-assessment-tool.pdf>

U.S. Department of Energy, Carsbad Office, & Westinghouse Electric Company. (1998). *GrantSAT: Grant Proposal Assessment Tool*. From <http://research.uwf.edu/documents/grant-proposal-self-assessment-tool.pdf>