# Envisioning Your Grant Proposal

## Goals and Objectives

The first step of defining the project is to clarify what the purpose of it is. At this point in the project, you are thinking broadly about the overall goals and what you are hoping the project accomplishes. Identifying the goals can help give shape to your ideas, even if you don't know what activities you want to perform yet.

Project goals typically relate to the ideal outcome of your project and reflect long-term changes. Generally a proposal includes one to three goals; having more than three goals might indicate that the project is not sufficiently focused.

In turn, each goal will have one or more objectives that help determine if the goal has been met. A common approach to writing objectives is to make them **SMART:**

- **S**pecific – the objective is defined as clearly as possible
- **M**easurable – data related to the objective can be collected
- **A**chievable – the objective is ambitious but realistic for your organization.
- **R**elevant – the mission of both your organization and the funder of the grant is clearly related to the objective
- **T**imed – you have a schedule for when the objective will be achieved. Typically this is imposed by the terms of your grant.

Having objectives that meet all of these characteristics makes it easier for you to determine whether the objective has been met. Organizations that offer grants like to know that there are clear criteria that define whether the project is meeting its goals.

Keep the following in mind when preparing your objectives:

- State your objectives in quantifiable terms.
- State your objectives in terms of outcomes, not process.
- Objectives should specify the result of an activity.
- Objectives should identify the target audience or community being served.
- Objectives need to be realistic and capable of being accomplished within the grant period.

## Tips for Writing Good Goals and Objectives

- Tie your goals and objectives directly to your need statement.
- Include all relevant groups and individuals in your target population.
- Always allow plenty of time to accomplish the objectives.
- Do not confuse your outcome objectives for methods.

- Figure out how you will measure the change projected in each objective. If there is no way to measure an objective, it's not measurable and should be rewritten.
- Don't forget to budget for the evaluation (measurement) of your objectives.

## Fitting Your Proposal to Its Audience

One of the most important parts of your project is to identify the primary people your project is intended for. Whatever your population, your proposal will require data to demonstrate the need you want to address, as well as information about the number of people with that need who could benefit from your project. Your target population does not necessarily need to be a certain percentage of your community's overall population for the project to be worthy of funding, but you will need to show that there are enough people from that population in your area that your project would be effective at meeting the need you identified.

If your project is intended for an audience of people from underrepresented or otherwise vulnerable populations, there are steps you can take to make your project activities sensitive and effective for them. Such projects might include people for the following audiences:

- Racial and ethnic minority populations
- Sexual and gender minority populations
- Populations reported below the Federal Poverty Level
- Populations with limited access to medical care
- Populations with physical and/or mental disabilities
- Soldiers, Veterans and Military Families
- Rural Populations
- Religious minority populations
- Senior citizens
- Immigrants or refugees

When designing your proposal, include people from your intended audience populations in the project planning phase. Also consider what other organizations in your community already work with your target audience. Ideally, your partner organization should be one that you already have a relationship with and have worked with in the past. These connections are incredibly valuable to your institution, even if you aren't exploring new projects or grant opportunities.

## Continuation Planning

One part of a proposal that is often overlooked is what happens after it ends. For grant-funded projects, the funder will want to know how your organization will continue addressing the need you identified after the grant has ended. Funders are concerned about their money having the biggest possible impact, so they consider whether this grant will help your institution perform this work in some form on an ongoing basis.

One form this can take is using the grant to fund the start-up of a project that you will then sustain through other funding mechanisms. For example, perhaps the grant project will serve as a proof of concept, which you will then use to request a budget increase for your institution to continue the project. In this case, detail where the additional funding would come from, and the data you will be collecting during the project to make the case for the budget increase.

However, the continuation of your project does not have to mean performing the same activities in the same way. Your project will lead to a set of skills and resources that will continue to exist after the project is completed and can help meet the need you identified in other ways.

## Logic Models

Logic models are quite effective at helping you think through what your program involves and what you hope to accomplish. This in turn makes it easier to make your case to a potential funder in a grant proposal, because you have already explained your project to yourself.

In a logic model, inputs are anything that you are investing into the program. This includes funding, materials, and the staff's workload. (In other words, if staff members are working on this project, they might not have the time to take on another new project.) The outputs are anything that your institution will create to make the project successful. This can include anything from information resources to services, activities and events.

The logic model can also help you focus on whether this is the right time to seek a grant for implementing the project. Writing a grant proposal is a large project that requires significant time, energy, and coordination. Before you make that kind of investment, the logic model provides a good opportunity to check the following:

- You want to start a new project or expand an existing project, and the costs can't be covered by your current budget.
- You are able to commit the needed time and energy to the grant-writing process and to the project you want to fund.
- You or someone at your institution is able to coordinate the various parts of preparing the grant proposal.
- The community you are a part of is receptive to the work that you want to do.

For more about how logic models are used in projects and proposals, consult NNLM's guide: **5 Steps to Developing an Evaluation**, in particular *Step 2: Make a logic model* and *Step 3. Develop indicators for your logic model*.

- Evaluation Planning Brief: Developing a Logic Model (PDF)
- Example: Logic Models (DOC)
- Logic Model Template (DOC)