Required Information for Any Proposal

Who are you and who are you as an organization?

What is your idea, problem, or question? Why is it significant, important, or needed?

Who will fund your project?

What is the match between your project and the donor?

Who will benefit from the grant?

What is the ultimate purpose or outcome of your project?

How will the goal be achieved?

How will the objectives be achieved? These are specific actions that are measurable, achievable, and time-bound.

Who will implement your project?

How will you know the project succeeded?

What is the timeline for your grant?

How much time do you need to distribute the grant funds?

Where will the funds be directed?

What is your track record with similar types of projects? Do you already have awards in place for the proposed project?

How will your project results be disseminated?

How will you sustain the project once the funds cease?

Collaboration/Networking Considerations

What internal politics do you need to consider prior to beginning the grant request? Does your organization have a history with the funder? If so, is it a successful one? Who has been involved in maintaining that relationship thus far? Is the program a limited submission one (meaning only one application per organization per funding cycle)?

What are the external politics you should consider prior to, during, and after submission?

Who are the people you should recruit for your team?
Who else might be writing grants for the same funding as your team, institutional or outside, and is it possible to combine teams or collaborate?

Other Important Factors to Consider

How will you assess the capability of your organization to administer and carry out the activities proposed?

Selecting your funding source and planning your proposal may take a few iterations before you can begin writing your proposal in earnest. **Do you have time allotted for these steps?**

Have you set aside time to speak with the Program Officer prior to writing the proposal? This step can have a significant impact on whether you win the grant. Don’t be afraid to ask Program Officers what others’ pitfalls have been that you should avoid. What are mistakes they see most often?

Maintenance of relationships with Program Officers is important. Keep in touch not just for reporting but also with press coverage, good things happening at your organization, etc. You can do so with funders you’re courting as well as current funders.

**As you write the proposal, think about the big picture and what the reviewers want to see; have you established your project’s connection to the donor’s mission?**

To avoid any last-minute delays or problems, keep the necessary submission deadlines in mind. **You should plan to submit your proposal to the funder at least three days in advance. At UT, this means submitting your proposal ten days in advance to allow the necessary time for the Office of Sponsored Projects to process it on their end. Grants submitted three days ahead of the deadline have a thirty-seven percent higher likelihood of being funded.**

Consider your target population and how they will benefit from the project. Have you made this clear in your proposal?

Consider a visual aide that outlines the activities within the proposed timeline. This is an easy way for funders to see that you are organized and have considered how, when, and at what cost all the activities will be carried out. Make your reviewers job easier for them.

What are challenges you anticipate and how will you handle them?

How will the project help overcome some of your organizations weaknesses?

Consider writing your abstract last, when you have the most complete picture of the project. This will help you avoid having to revise it each time the scope of the proposal changes. It is also possibly the only piece of the proposal that will be read at certain stages of the review process, so it’s critical that it delivers the most compelling yet concise view of the project.

Always be aware that you’re establishing a reputation. Every time you send in a half-baked proposal, you are setting a poor precedent for your organization. Do not “test the waters” with reviewers.
Ideally, you would have three people review your proposal before submitting it to the CSD: an expert in your field, someone with general knowledge of your field, and someone in the English department.

**Budget FAQs**

“Indirect/overhead” is a federally negotiated rate, which is 56.5% for the 2016-2017 fiscal year.

Many private funders do not allow overhead of any kind, but must specifically state as such in the RFP. Additionally, some organizations may specify a reduced indirect rate, which also needs to be documented in writing from the funder.

Fringe rates vary according to salary; please check with a CSD officer to find out yours and your collaborators’ own when preparing your budget.

GRA’s cost an average of $16/hour not including fringe, with a stipend for nine hours of tuition at $4,500. Total cost for one semester runs approximately $12,028.

Many funders require some degree of matching funds come from the requesting institution. Matching funds may come in the form of cash, contributed time/salary/fringe, space, equipment, or any number of other in-kind contributions.

Most funders are explicit about what they will and will not fund. Make sure your request does not include unallowable expenses according to the funder’s guidelines.

DO NOT pad your budget. If you’re adding extra items to reach the ask limit, you will draw criticism from reviewers.

**10 Common Elements of Winning Proposals**

1. Winning proposals have clearly defined needs and describe how those needs were identified.

2. Winning proposals describe what will be done. Create a real-life scenario for the reader. The reader must understand what you intend to do.

3. Winning proposals present the material in a logical manner. Sections are clearly identified and a parallel structure is maintained. Each need has stated objective, activity, and evaluation statement.

4. Winning proposals are written in positive terms. Some writers believe that if you describe how bleak a situation is, someone will give you money to solve the problem. This is not true. Funders hedge their bets by backing proposals that describe worthwhile programs that will meet identified needs and match the criteria set forth by the granting agency.

5. Winning proposals do not overuse jargon.

6. Winning proposals present detailed budgets that match your proposed program. All bases must
be covered. If you are going to purchase hardware, have you purchased software? If you plan to offer training, how much, and what will it cost?

7. Winning proposals give something back. Some projects develop a product. The process you go through can become a product. Funders want others to adopt and adapt what you’ve learned.

8. Winning proposals follow the guidelines specified in the RFP. If a scoring rubric or evaluation checklist is given to you, read it and follow those directions!

9. Winning proposals look professional. They are word-processed and presented according to the guidelines of the RFP.

10. Winning proposals are not too short or too long. They tend to be only as long as necessary to answer every question in the RFP. Use the scoring guidelines to determine length for sections. For example, let’s say the granting agency wants the finished proposal to be no longer than ten pages. If the scoring guidelines weight the evaluation section to be twenty percent of the final score, that means twenty percent, or two pages for the evaluation. If the RFP mandates a page limit, DO NOT exceed that number.