

THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT WRITING GRANT PROPOSALS

BY TAY TONG

INTRODUCTION

Writing grant proposals for funding, be it funding from private foundations, government agencies or individuals, is generally thought to be difficult and time-consuming. However, it does not have to be so.

What distinguishes one proposal from another is firstly, strong artistic concept and content; secondly, thoughtful, cohesive and systematic composition.

TYPES OF GRANT PROPOSALS

There are basically three types of grant proposals:

1. A Letter of Inquiry (LOI) or an Expression of Interest (EOI). These are brief descriptions of the project your funder may ask of you *before* making a decision to request for a longer and more comprehensive proposal. Both an LOI and EOI should be a one to two page summary outlining your work. In most instances, there is no need to provide a budget.
2. A Letter Proposal is a three to five page description of your project where you will state the purpose of the funds needed, background information of the artist or arts group requesting for the said funds, as well as the budget. This type of Letter Proposal is usually sent to private foundations and individual funders.
3. The Long Proposal is the most common type of document funders ask for. They are usually from three to ten pages long. The usual format includes a Need Statement, Goal and Objectives, Methods, Budget and an Evaluation Plan.

Increasingly, funders prefer online applications, providing template forms for you to complete. For online applications, TIMELINESS is of paramount importance. Do be aware that the date and time of deadlines may not be of your timezone. This is especially crucial if you are applying to a funder situated in a city that is *ahead* of Singapore's timezone.

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE

1. Assess if your project is compatible with the funder's ideology, principles and philosophy. For instance, you should not approach a funder whose interest is in capability development for youth, with a project that is aimed at alleviating the suffering of senior citizens.
2. After you have identified a compatible funder, deep-dive into the application

guidelines. Read the guidelines thoroughly to ensure that you have all the necessary information to meet your funder's criterion.

3. In the written proposal, begin with a Need Statement. This is a description of your artistic / creative / social / community intention that your project aims to address.
4. You may wish to support your Need Statement with persuasive evidence such as up-to-date research data, news reports, photographs, or a link to a video, for an example.
5. Set out your Goal and Objectives clearly. A Goal is the end result that the Objectives will help you reach. Both your Goal and Objectives should tie directly to your Need Statement. The funder must be able to see this direct connection, that is, once you have met your Objectives, you would have reached your Goal and resolved the said Need. Ensure you can responsibly fulfil the Goal and Objectives of your project. If you have little or no confidence to deliver on them, do not state them.
6. Next, outline the various Methods or ways to achieve your Objectives. Here, you should have a detailed description of the Activities to be implemented. Do explain why you have chosen these Methods as opposed to others, as this shows that you have carefully considered options.
7. Do use some of the following tips below when developing your Methods:
 - a) State the Start Date and End Date of your project;
 - b) Specify the Activities that need to be implemented to meet your Objectives;
 - c) Name your collaborators and any persons responsible for completing each of the Activity. You may also wish to attach their respective bios; Click [here](#) for Artist Bio Sample.
 - d) Spell out the criterion for selecting participants, for example, a section of the community that you will be serving;
 - e) Always show how the Methods are congruent with the resources requested for in the Budget.
8. The Budget section should detail the funds you will need to carry out your project. Click [here](#) for Budget Sample to see which items you will need specifically for your project.
9. When crafting your Budget:
 - a) Ensure that every single item ties back to your project's Methods and Activities. Be specific and do not provide unrelated expenses;
 - b) Funders want to know where their support is going, so be detailed in listing all items dutifully;
 - c) Always indicate potential sources of incomes *other than* those from the funder. If you have already received partial funding from another source, do indicate it clearly. It is a rarity that one single funder will provide support for your entire project. The funder would also like to know who your other funders are, to see if he is keeping "good company".

- d) In summary, your Budget should itemise the following:
- Production Costs;
 - Manpower Costs for Creatives /Production /Technical /Administrative;
 - Publicity/Marketing Costs;
 - Venue Hire Costs;
 - Transportation Costs;
 - Taxes, if any;
 - All costs related to Regional/ International travel, that is, if there are non-Singapore collaborators. These would include cost of airfare, hotel, per diem, visa etc.
10. Finally, we arrive at the “KPI” section, or the Key Performance Indicator section, where your funder will assess how effective your project has been at achieving its Goal and Objectives. KPIs provide critical performance-based information that will enable you and your funder to know if you are “on track”. This is a section you need not dread as KPIs can serve as useful guideposts for how your project is progressing.
11. In this KPI section, articulate how you will measure the degree of success in meeting your Goal and Objectives. Do consider the following:
- a) How will you know if the project’s Goal and Objectives have been met?
 - b) Will you be able to gather all the relevant data to evaluate your project fairly and accurately?
 - c) How will this data be analysed?
 - d) How and when will you report the above findings to your funder? And in what manner will this report be disseminated?

LAST WORDS FROM TAY TONG

Throughout your grant application, use language that is easy to read and understand.

Always be precise and concise!

GOOD LUCK!

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