

WRITING WINNING GRANT PROPOSALS

BY

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ABOUT ME

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GRANT PROPOSAL

▶ AND SO WHAT?

INTRODUCTION

- ▶ A fundamental skill you cannot do without for relevance, impact and sustainability
- ▶ WHY? The primary purpose of a project proposal is to convince the donor agency to fund your project.
- ▶ Therefore, beyond the evident passion to create change and advance society, beyond the skills in advocacy, beyond being a good social analyst, beyond having the ability to organize and mobilise actions, beyond having connections and knowing people, the VERY KEY thing that will bring the fund you require is the a WINNING PROPOSAL.

Intro

- ▶ A likely winning proposal must be innovative, practical, and methodological.
- ▶ A **WINNING** proposal is not just about **STATING** or **EXPRESSING** what project ideas you want to implement, it is more about **SHOWING** what **CHANGE** you want to create or contribute to achieving.

...winning

- ▶ Some people say, 'I have written several proposals and I have not been selected?'
- ▶ True, there are several proposals that will not sail through and there are many factors for that. If we don't KNOW or UNDERSTAND what it takes to write a WINNING proposal, we will NEVER write a proposal that will get a grant. Though some people get funds from philanthropy and from donations, this may be because you are good at 'begging' people for support; but why beg to get pittance when you can actually earn a fund through a grant?

.....winning

- ▶ A winning proposal is also one that assures the donor/funder of VALUE FOR MONEY....related to this is to note that donors do not have limitless funds
- ▶ A scenario: If you have N1000, would you give it to the person that comes to you begging for it because he or she is hungry or have people around him or her that are hungry? OR, would you give it the person who comes to you offering to clean your blocked drain in order to get the money he/she needs to feed or to feed people around him or her that are hungry? The answers may be relative, but it's most likely you would want to give to that person that is providing you a service to earn it rather to the person who is begging you for it because of his or her condition

....winning

- ▶ In the NGO world, the funder/donor is the person/organisation that has the money. The funders/donors always have social or developmental issues of interest they need NGOs to help mitigate, reduce or ameliorate. Insecurity in Nigeria, corruption, child mortality rate, poverty conditions, human right abuse, press freedom issues, police brutality, polio, HIV/AIDS, bad governance, conduct of credible elections, marginalisation of women, rights denials of PWDs and youths, etc, could be some of the 'social issues' in Nigeria that international funders/donors in advanced countries needs NGO's to help resolve.
- ▶ **KNOW WHAT THE DONOR IS INTERSTED IN**

....winning

- ▶ The interest of the funders/donors is that if these issues constituting 'problems' for Nigeria are not resolved, Nigeria and Nigerians (as well as any under developed nation) may pose a problem to their own welfare at a global stage, hence there are several donors/funders who are institutionally or privately committed to addressing the different social issues and challenges in Nigeria.
- ▶ Demonstration of capacity to render a service of or offer solutions to developmental or social problems is what is captured through a PROPOSAL.
- ▶ PROPOSAL WRITING is about TELLING/SHOWING the funder/donor what you will do and how you will do it with the grant. You can also look at it in the context of what contribution you will make to address particular problems.

....winning

- ▶ **NOTE:** Writing a proposal and not winning is a very frustrating experience for many NGO's and that's why some NGO's are run as a philanthropic organisations where they have to create a 'scene' of pity and helplessness in order to get funding support.
- ▶ So how will you or your NGO get the funds? Through a **GOOD** proposal!
- ▶ If you know **WHAT** it takes to write a good NGO proposal, you can run your NGO's in a very sustainable way. **AND** you don't really have to be the person to write the proposal, however, **KNOWING** what should be in the proposal is **KEY**.

FUNDAMENTALS OF A CONCEPT NOTE AND A GRANT PROPOSAL

- ▶ Whether writing a Concept Note or a Grant proposal, the information you provide must convince the donor to fund you.
- ▶ a. What is a Concept Note?
 - Foundation for actual grant proposal
 - Shortest expression of a project idea written down in a specific format and given to a donor.
 - The purpose is to present an idea to a funder/donor in order for the funder/donor to decide whether the proposed project aligns with their priorities.
- ▶ The goal is to highlight the key details of the project idea in such a way that the donor will understand what you intend to do.
- ▶ Usually between 2-5 pages and will normally include short notes as introduction, project background, proposed objectives, activity idea, expected outcome and an estimated budget. Any additional information, such as your organizational profile can be annexed or provided upon request by the funding agency.

Concept Note Structure

The typical structure of a Concept Note will contain a heading such (Concept Note submitted to XYZ) and include the following:

1. **Title of the Proposed Project** – This should be an aspirational statement that contributes to solving a problem or providing solutions to a problem or a social cause of concern. This statement should give a clear picture of the project idea. This statement shouldn't be more than 20 words. Ideally it should be between 6-15 words.
2. **Name of your organisation** – This can include a very brief statement of the organisation and what it does. (Sometimes, the name of your NGO gives an indication of what you do, and so a brief statement may not be required). If your NGO has an indicative name, you may not bother explaining. Eg. The 'International Press Centre (IPC)' can easily be linked to media, journalism or communications. If the title of the project is related to a media initiative, there may be no need to provide a brief, but if IPC's project idea is about wealth creation and empowerment of women, it may be required to put a statement to link IPC with the project idea.
3. **Contact Information of the NGO** – This would be the name of the official representative of the organisation (E.g Mr/Mrs XYZ, Executive Director, CEO of this and that NGO) including the office Address, telephone, email, and website as applicable.

...structure

4. Context – This is brief explanation of the importance of the project, and it will include citing a social problem, the negative consequence arising or that may arise from the problem and what you are proposing to be done to address the issue.
5. Objectives/goals – This is an aspiration statement of anticipated big view changes. They must be **SMART**
6. Expected Results (outcomes) – This should be directly related to SPECIFIC OR OVERSALL OBJECTIVES of the project. It answers the question ‘what will change?’ in a positive way.
7. The rationale for the Proposed Project – This is short narratives (about half a page/less than a page why the project is important and the choice of a certain approach in its implementation.
- 8 .Proposed activities: This will caption set of activities that will be implemented under the project.
9. Budget Estimates – An ‘actual’ estimation of cost associated in implementing the project and may include the cost of hiring people, buying equipment and supplies, travel costs, facilities rentals, feeding, and more. (Some donor state what cost to be captured here and to what extent). The budget is NOT a guess work? It must be realistic and DETAILED

....winning

- ▶ **Note: Each donor has their area of interest so it is first important to do a back ground check of the potential donor/funder to ensure that the Concept Note you want to send falls within the purview of the donors interest areas or potential interest areas. Some donors accept unsolicited Concept Note, others do not accept. Also ensure that the donor's interest aligns with the project ideas. Where it is the donor that has approached you or made an open call (solicited call), also ensure that your intervention is in one of the areas that have been listed as interest areas, potential work areas, or they have supported or would support, based on their thematic focus.**

...winning

- ▶ b. **What is a grant Proposal? In the non-profit/NGO world, a proposal is a document with which an NGO puts forward a specific project idea to a donor for funding consideration. Thus, a proposal is a tool for NGOs to generate funds to fulfill mandate, and for donors to decide who to fund. In other words, a project proposal explains the plan and purpose for the set of activities an NGO wishes to implement, and requests funding from a donor.**
- ▶ **A proposal is a more detailed, more explanatory and more engaging document than a Concept Note. Most times, it builds on the Concept Note.**

....grant proposal

- ▶ In addition to the basic information of the Concept Note, which shall include Title of the Proposed Project; About the Organization; Contact Information of the NGO, the other details to be provided in an NGO grant proposal may include all or most of the following:
 - ▶ 1. Problem Statement
 - ▶ 2. Project Rationale or Justification - Why?
 - ▶ 3. Project Goal & Objectives - What?
 - ▶ 4. Strategies & Activities – How?
 - ▶ 5. Work plan/implementation chart - Means
 - ▶ 6. Results: Outputs, Outcomes , Impact
 - ▶ 7. Performance indicators/M & E
 - ▶ 8. Sustainability Plan
 - ▶ 9. Visibility strategy
 - ▶ 10. Logical framework
 - ▶ 11. Profile of team/task designation
 - ▶ 12. Budget (With line by line breakdown in a prescribed format)
 - ▶ 13. Organizational managerial ability/institutional capacity requirements (Structure of the organization, relevant experience/Past project, CAC doc, audit report, etc)
- ▶ The grant document may be up to 10-20 pages or as much as 50-100 pages of response to different question statements, depending on the funder/donor.

...problem statement

Problem Statement or Project Rationale

A problem Statement/Project Rationale is a r summary of the problems identified relating to the project or issue to be addressed by the project.

- It has to be precise and point-to-point basis.
- Use of quotes, live examples, references, research data and press articles would be very helpful.
- It has to be very specific to donor issues and priorities.
- References to other NGOs, Governmental work in the area working against the same problem would be very useful.

Note:

- Projects evolve out of identified problems
- It is the problem that comes before a project
- The secret of solving a problem is proper identification of the problem. This requires a thorough investigation.
- A problem does not happen in isolation. It goes hand in hand with cause and effect.
- There is a relationship between cause and effect. They are linked by the problem.

...statement

- ▶ A way to analyze a problem is through analyzing the root causes and its effects.
- ▶ State the problem as effectively and precisely as possible
- ▶ Refer to any research data that is available, including publications, reports, newspapers etc.
- ▶ Give a narration of community perception with quotes.
- ▶ Check back how well it matches with the donor guidelines or issues.
- ▶ Give thorough background information about the region, community and resources available.
- ▶ Explain the organizational strength and capacity in countering this problem and achieving long-term results.

...goal

Project Goal

- Very general, high-level and long-term
 - A project cannot achieve the entire goal on its own
 - May support or contribute to the overall policy of the government or the donor agency.
- ▶ Usually there is one project goal only and it can be reflected in the title of the project also. For example, “Reducing the impact of malaria on pregnant women and children in Nigeria” can be a project goal, as you are contributing to the solving problem in addition to other efforts. You alone cannot achieve this!

.....objectives

3. Project Objectives

Project Objectives should be: SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound. Project objectives are the specific purpose for which the project works to achieve them within a stipulated time. They should directly address the problem mentioned in the Problem Statement.

The more specific it is the better to design activities, indicators and the Logical Framework Analysis. Specific objectives also help address the problem stated and convince the donor easily.

Tips:

- Think about what success means for your project and how you would show that success
- Refer to the results you expect from the project
- Describe the focus population and the desired change among the population
- Include the location and time period for each objective
- Reflect the intended changes in systemic conditions or behaviors that must be achieved to accomplish the goal/strategic objective
- Objectives should have measurable indicators which show what, when, and how conditions, behaviors, and practices will change
- Objectives must be verifiable at some point during the execution of the project

...from objectives to strategies & activities

Some Inappropriate words not to be used while writing Objectives

- Train
- Provide
- Produce
- Establish
- Create

4. Strategies and Activities

- ▶ Proposals are required to outline how the objectives of the project would be achieved. Here, it will be necessary to mention the Strategies and the Activities to be implemented in the project. There is a lot of difference between strategies and activities. Strategies are broad concepts under which activities are placed. Strategies in a project can include:
- ▶ Capacity-building/ awareness raising
- ▶ Organizational development
- ▶ Research & Development
- ▶ Advocacy
- ▶ Participatory Infrastructure Development Strategy

...activities

Activities can include:

- ▶ **Training workshops, street shows, rallies**
- ▶ **Staff selection, staff training**
- ▶ **Baseline, FGD**
- ▶ **Conferences, meetings, articles, publications**
- ▶ **Establishing shelter homes, counseling, legal support**

Expected/anticipated Project Results

5. Expected Results

- ▶ Results are changes that we expect to take place following the implementation of the project activities. The results are generally anticipated positive experiences that the project will achieve working with the beneficiaries. Results are divided into three types: 1. Outputs 2. Outcomes 3. Impact.

NOTE: Though the project is yet to be carried out, the donor expects you to forecast or anticipate some results that the project will achieve. (This is actually WHY you are being funded!)

- ▶ Outputs are what you expect to 'produce', or what you actually deliver.
- ▶ Outputs are the foundation for results. For example, if a training on human right is carried out in a project, the output can be “a greater understanding of human rights amongst the participants.”
- ▶ Outcomes are the tangible – e.g. the **SIGNIFICANT** change we will begin to see – in behaviour, attitude, policies, actions, policies, etc, as a result of the **OUTPUT** (Remember – and so what?)

...outcomes

- ▶ What will be achieved
- ▶ Make your outcomes smart
- ▶ Outcomes come with verifiable indicators.
- ▶ It captures the 'change' that has occurred and it can be traced to the project output arising from the activity.
- ▶ In the above example, the outcome could be that "Human rights watch groups in the communities are engaging (OUTPUT) with Nigeria Police force and the engagement is helping to curb police brutality." - ...in other words change in attitude

IMPACT

Impact

* Impact is aspirational

- Reinforcing democracy
- Reinforcing gender rights
- Reinforce human rights

6. Performance indicators/M & E

This speaks to how you will measure result levels at output, outcome and impact are tracked. You are expected to provide a methodological based approach that ensures that results are captured. Indicators provide baseline information, the targets, the risk factors, etc

.....impact

7. Sustainability plan

The sustainability plan is basically a document, that describes how your project will be sustained in the long term. This document or statements focuses on community sustainability, financial sustainability, and organizational sustainability. The sustainability plan has become more and more important because donors would like to fund projects that have the potential to survive and thrive in the long term. The sustainability plan describes the different aspects in which the project has to be sustained in the long run to still function.

8. Communication and Visibility plan

The Communication and Visibility Plan is a statement that indicates how you will ensure valuable communication about the projects' activities while informing important external stakeholders and the public about the impact of the project.

Logical framework



9. A Logframe is another name for Logical Framework, a planning tool consisting of a matrix which provides an overview of a project's goal, activities and anticipated results. It provides a structure to help specify the components of a project and its activities and for relating them to one another.

10. Profile of team/task designation

This is a profile (and CVs) of key team members who shall be engaged in the implementation of the project and their different roles. This is important because there would be financial implications which would be captured in the budgetary allocation. The donor would want to assess whether the team members have the capacity or expertise to deliver key tasks of the project

11. Budget

The budget contains projected/estimated costs project activities (Material and human resources). Each items has to be itemized as clearly as possible and presented in the required format. It should be in line with the activities set in the project.

...organisation

12. Organizational managerial ability/institutional capacity requirements

- Organizational profile
- What is the organization's management structure?
- Ability to manage the project/demonstrated capacity in managing similar project
- Financial and institutional capacity
- Staff capacity and experience
- Financial/institution requirement

...budget

- ▶ **Note: This can be a major consideration in whether your proposal is accepted or not. The donors are not giving free money so they want to be sure that the NGO has the capacity to manage their funds.**
- ▶ **CAC registration certificate, annual audited accounts, etc, are basic qualifying requirements**
- ▶ **If you don't have these essential institutional documents, ensure you have them otherwise it may affect the success of your proposal**
- ▶ **Corporate Best practices are also important – Boards, checks & balances, etc**
- ▶ **Organisational policy documents**

CONCLUSION

- ▶ Carefully and appropriately responding to the basic questions of the Concept Note Template or the Grant Proposal template is imperative and essential to winning grants or funds from donors/funders.
- ▶ The best practice is to have a team of persons or an expert that can adequately provide all the answers in the best possible way.
- ▶ Proposal writing is a special skills ability, that can be learnt and improved on. If you don't know how to write one, start with a concept note, and if required, engage an expert to write one for you, in as much as your NGO also can satisfy the basic organisation requirement of CAC registration and Audited account.
- ▶ If you are just starting or prospecting to start an NGO, align with an existing NGO and use that to build your profile. NGO and development initiatives are always work in progress, if you are yet to win an NGO grant, keep learning and improving and in a matter of months or years, you would have gained the required capacity to win grants

Credit: Sanmi Falobi, Project Manager, IPC

Adapted notes/resources from <https://www.portal365.org> and www.fundsforngos.org

...for your attention



THANK YOU!!!!