

Tips, Strategies, Urgings and Gentle Prods Toward Successful Proposals

A proposal is never as important as the ideas, planning, collaborations, organization and sweat behind it. A proposal should be a clear window into the project or program or building or scholarship or endowment or research that needs funding. Its purpose is to let the light shine through. Here are the five most important elements of a proposal, followed by a list of other things you should consider.

1. GOALS & OBJECTIVES.

Most companies and foundations are persnickety about what will be accomplished with their money. The best way to explain this is through goals and objectives.

- Goals = general aims of a project or program
- Objectives = specific measureable outcomes that will help you achieve your goals

One of the most logical ways to express this to a donor:

- Problem: state the problem your program will address.
- Objectives: list the outcomes (measureable) your program will achieve.
- Methods: list the actions you will take to achieve the objectives.
- Evaluation: describe your plan for determining and measuring your success.

2. THE BUDGET.

A budget tells a story and is usually the first or second thing potential donors look at.

Be as detailed and accurate as possible.

How much money do you need to accomplish your purpose?

How will it be spent?

Are there other funders supporting this project?

3. COLLABORATION.

The biggest impact of a gift frequently comes through collaboration. Donors like scenarios where one gift will benefit multiple populations and organizations.

Who is doing something similar to what you are proposing?

Is there a community organization that could help compliment your project? Locally? Nationally?

Is there another university or school that would make a good partner?

What companies should be involved or are involved?

4. RETURN ON INVESTMENT.

Who will be served as a result of this funding?

What is the impact, in measureable terms, over the next year? Three years? Five years?

What is the impact on students at UT Arlington?

Will there be a benefit to the community

5. SUSTAINABILITY.

Do you need a source of revenue for more than one year? Foundations and corporations are rarely sustainable sources of funds. If your program must survive, how will you fund it year after year? What other funding sources do you have? Service fees? Event income? Individual or alumni contributions? Other partners who will bring funding into the project? Are you seeking to establish an endowment? If so, how will you do this?

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Foundations give because by law they must give 5% of their assets to charity each year.
- Companies give to be strategic and to show social responsibility.
- Corporate and foundation gifts can take 6-9 months to secure.
- Grantmakers establish goals, objectives and guidelines for a reason. Follow them without fail.
- Grantmakers appreciate brief and well-written proposals.
- Yes, sometimes there is not a donor for a specific idea or project.
- Transformational ideas = BIG \$