
Truman State University
How To Develop A Proposal: Some General Information

Use the Grants Office Website

The Grants Office has developed a comprehensive website located at <http://grants.truman.edu>. The website contains a wealth of resources related to proposal development, grant sources and other helpful information. Links to federal agencies, foundations, and subscription databases are available. Copies of the External Funding Source Approval Form can be completed on-screen and printed for submission. Other University forms, such as the IRB Application are also available. The most current issue and several previous issues of "GrantSource", the Grants Office monthly newsletter, are available on-line. The Grants Office website is frequently updated. Your suggestions are appreciated.

Use The Proposal Development Worksheet

The "Proposal Development Worksheet" that is on the Grants Office website will help you write a synopsis of the most important features of your proposal idea. The information on the Worksheet can be used as a guide when you write the full proposal.

Identifying a Funding Source

The Office of Grants will be happy to help you locate potential sources for your external funding needs. The Office of Grants subscribes to a variety of on-line and hard copy directories, journals and newsletters to locate funding sources that are of interest to the Truman community. The "GrantSource" newsletter, which is published monthly, contains information about funding opportunities and listings of upcoming submission dates. A "Request for Information" page is included in each newsletter that provides the opportunity to list your project ideas and mail to the Grants Office so that related announcements can be sent to you. You are also welcome to call the Grants Office with a request, or to schedule an appointment to discuss a particular project.

Make A Preliminary Contact

A recent statistic shows that proposals are three times more likely to be funded when a preliminary contact is made with a funding organization than when no contact is made. Regardless of whether you're applying to a federal agency or a private funding source, it is important to remember that competition for funds is intense. Your proposal must address the priorities of the funding source, must adhere strictly to any written guidelines, and must be clear and financially sound. Early contact with an agency official or program officer can help you fine-tune your proposal!

Three important reasons to make an early contact with the funding agency:

- 1. Program officers can help interpret the guidelines and give you useful tips about designing your project.***
- 2. Some program officers are willing to critique a draft of your proposal and offer suggestions for improvement before it is submitted to the reviewers.***
- 3. Talking with agency staff places your name and the name of your institution before them -- excellent PR!***

Since it is often not possible to meet directly with a program officer, you will usually need to make a telephone contact. It is important to organize your comments and questions before you call. Be prepared to briefly describe your proposal idea. Ask the official for suggestions that might strengthen your project. Read through the submission guidelines carefully and write down any questions you have. Ask about any budget items that are not clear.

Some federal agencies now encourage you to submit a draft proposal early so a program officer can critique it for you. While these individuals are not normally involved in the actual selection process, their suggestions will help you strengthen your proposal before it is submitted for final review.

Ask Your Colleagues for Help

Ask one or two of your peers to read your proposal critically and to be honest in their suggestions. An objective point of view is often the best way to identify sections of your proposal that need to be clarified or strengthened.

The Proposal Development Cycle

Develop the Idea

Select a Funding Source

Contact the Potential
Funding Organization

Write The Proposal

Obtain Institutional Approval

Submit Proposal to
Funding Source

Was it Funded?

YES

Conduct Project

Is it Renewable?

YES

Develop
Renewal
Proposal

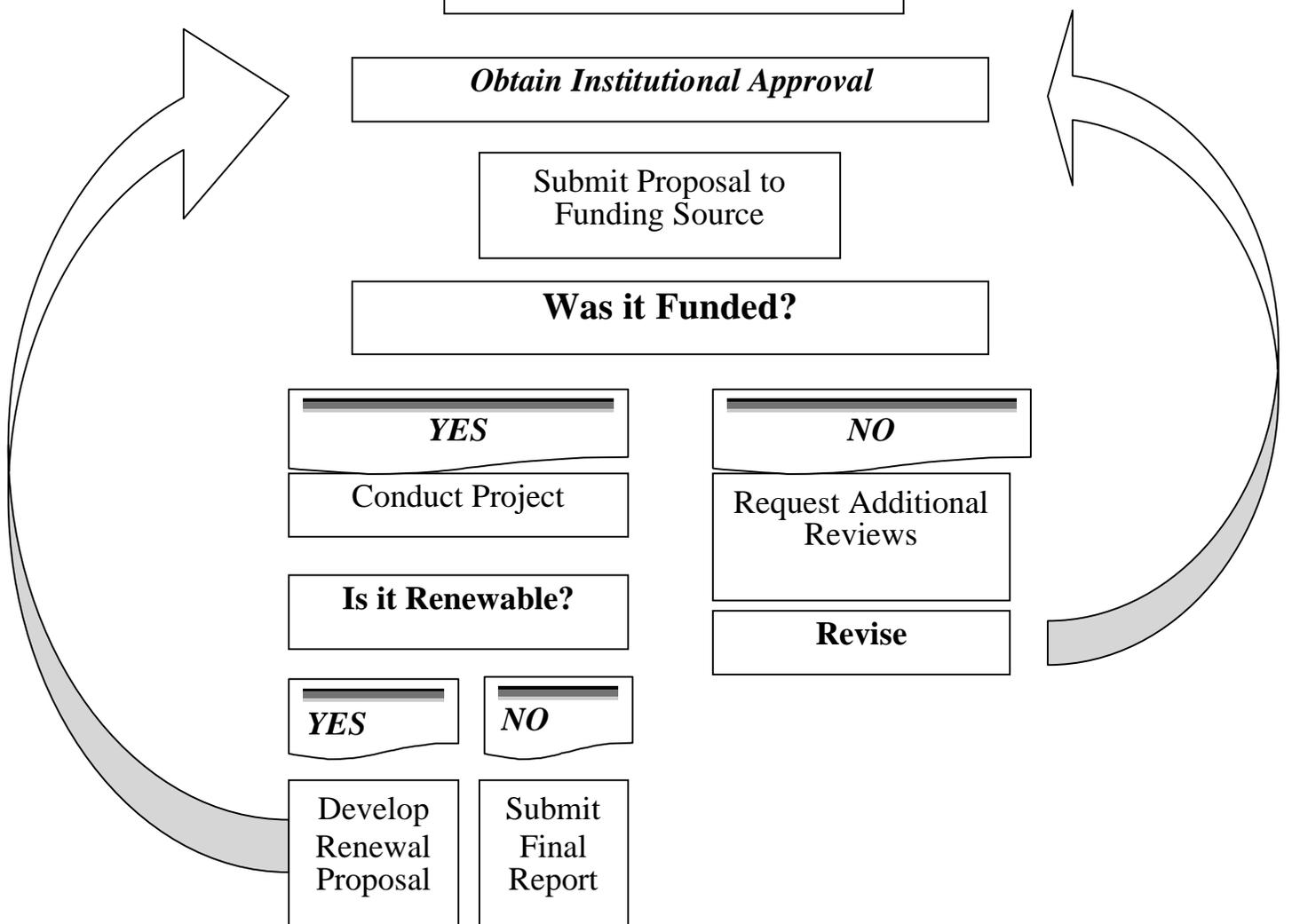
NO

Submit
Final
Report

NO

Request Additional
Reviews

Revise



Truman State University

How To Develop A Proposal: Sections of A Proposal

Most funding sources publish specific guidelines for proposal submission. While the guidelines of federal agencies are usually very strict, the requirements of foundations and corporations may be more informal. However, it is important to **read instructions carefully and to follow them deliberately.** Reviewers often disqualify proposals that do not meet requirements, without even considering the quality of the actual project!

Below is an outline of the most common elements of a proposal. This is provided to give you an idea of the type of information that should be included in each section, not to establish a specific format for every proposal.

COVER LETTER

Brief letter accompanying the proposal that states:

- why you have selected this sponsor
- how your project matches the sponsor's priorities
- specific financial request being made

SUMMARY/ABSTRACT

One page, concise summary that is written last. Includes:

- specific purpose of proposal
- identification of the applicant and a sentence about credibility to carry out project
- brief description of project
- the anticipated end result
- amount of money requested

TABLE OF CONTENTS

An easy reference for the reader.

- not required in a letter or short proposal

INTRODUCTION

Describes Truman's qualifications & establishes our credibility by:

- describing Truman's history & goals
- describing significant accomplishments
- describing the services Truman provides which relate to the proposal request
- defining staff qualifications and collaborations with other organizations

PROBLEM STATEMENT/NEED Documents a critical condition or set of conditions effecting people or things, in a specific place, at a specific time by:

- defining specific problem or need
- documenting need with relevant research, statistics, requests from individuals
- explaining who or what is effected by this problem and what the impact will be
- describing the benefits of solving the problem
- describing your qualifications (and/or those of your group) to solve the problem

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

A GOAL is an ultimate result of the project. It is a broad-

based statement which states the result of the change being undertaken.

An *OBJECTIVE* is a measurable, time-specific result which will be accomplished as part of the grant. It is based on realistic expectations; is much more narrowly defined than a goal; should be stated in measurable terms.

- Goals & Objectives should relate directly to the problem statement.
- Goals & Objectives are not methods.

METHODS/ACTIVITIES

A detailed description of the specific activities that will take place during the grant period.

- Explain chronologically or in some logical order the activities or research plan that you will pursue.
- Explain the rationale for choosing the methods; discuss research findings, expert opinion, your experience with similar projects, results from other institutions.
- State what facilities and capital equipment will be used in the project.
- Describe the responsibilities of each person involved in the project.
- Include a project timeline.
- Don't assume that the reviewers innately understand the basic philosophy or tenets of you project.

EVALUATION/ DISSEMINATION

A plan to assess the success of the project and to disseminate the results or progress. This section should:

- Determine the criteria that will be used to evaluate the project and who will conduct the evaluation.
- Decide what types of evaluation instruments will be needed (if any) - surveys, questionnaires, statistical packages, etc.
- Explain how and when you will evaluate progress toward project objectives and goals.
- Provide a discussion of how you will disseminate the information gained from the project.
- Explain who will be interested in the results, what audiences you might target, and specific professional conferences or publications that will be part of the dissemination process.

FUTURE FUNDING

Describes how the organization will continue the project after the end of the grant.

- Since most funding agencies want to know about the long-term effects of grant funding, it is extremely important to show how your project will be "institutionalized" at Truman.
- If the project is to continue beyond the grant period, planning must be done to provide funding or other support.
- Explore a variety of sources and means to continue funding the project.
- Try not to be too general by indicating the funding will come

from "a variety of sources such as foundations & corporations." Most funders regard such statements with suspicion.

BUDGET

Gives a line-item detailed expense and income summary of the project. A budget normally has three parts:

Income, Expenses and the Budget Narrative

- Develop the budget by analyzing the activities planned in the methods and evaluation components.
- Make sure the budget reflects carefully estimated expenses.
- If the funder requests a certain type of budget, comply with the request.
- Know and show the requested, donated and total amounts for each item.
- List all staff positions and the percentage of time each will devote to the project.
- Be sure to include the cost of the evaluation component.
- Seek the assistance of persons in your organization who deal with budgets.

Some Budget Particulars

Although most budgets are presented in a line item format, different types of projects require different types of budget detail. It is very important for every item in your budget to be justifiable and to relate to the goals, methods and other definite aspects of the project. Most government agencies and foundations require detailed budgets, and usually provide specific budget preparation forms. It is recommended that the budget be prepared after the main body of the proposal is complete. In addition to the line item budget, it is important to include a budget justification, which explains how each budget amount was determined. Three sample budgets are included in the Appendices.

While the Office of Grants and Foundation Relations will advise or assist with budget preparation, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator, in consultation with the Department Head or Administrator, to plan and develop the budget. Each budget must be approved by the Office of Grants and Foundation Relations and the Business Office before it is submitted as part of a proposal. Contacting the Grants Office early will help avoid potential problems and assure an accurate budget.

Direct Costs

Direct costs are those that are incurred as a result of sponsoring a particular project. They are usually listed first, by category in your budget. These costs generally include:

Salaries and wages

Personnel benefits, such as FICA, retirement plan contributions, and health insurance

Supplies - consumable supplies needed for the project

Travel and communication

Equipment - acquired for specific use in the project

Computer use - computer time and support, calculated through an approved rate schedule

Indirect Costs

Indirect costs are those "hidden costs" associated with sponsoring every project, and therefore cannot be identified readily or specifically with a particular sponsored project. Indirect costs usually include:

General administration and expense - accounting, payroll, etc.
Facilities operation and maintenance - utilities, janitorial services, routine maintenance and repair
Library expense
Departmental administration expenses
Depreciation and use allowance

Both direct and indirect costs are real costs incurred by the University. Truman State University's indirect cost rate is negotiated periodically with the Department of Health and Human Services. The current indirect cost rate must be included in all proposals where recovery of indirect costs is allowed. If a sponsor limits the indirect costs, the difference between the negotiated University rate and the sponsor-allowed rate can be shown as a Truman contribution. Check with the Grants Office for the current indirect cost rate.

Budget Considerations

Anticipating Cost Increases - Especially for multi-year projects, it is important that enough funds be included in the budget to cover cost increase after the first year. Cost increases result from salary increases for project staff, vendor price projections, inflation or simply, professional judgment and experience. The University establishes guidelines for budgeting personnel costs into the future. Other budget increases should reflect thoughtful and defensible assumptions.

Release Time - Release time refers to the freeing of a part of an individual's time from regular duties for another activity, such as a sponsored project. There are two types of release time: that for which the sponsor pays and that for which the University pays (cost sharing). *Release time included in a sponsored project must be approved by the appropriate Division Head or Administrator early in the proposal development period. A proposal will not be submitted unless this approval has been arranged.*

Supplemental Compensation - Both federal guidelines and University policy do not permit supplemental pay during the time an employee is under contract to the institution. Thus nine-month employees cannot receive supplemental pay during the academic year. Employees on twelve-month contracts are not eligible for supplemental pay during the academic year or the summer. Typically, sponsored program activities are considered part of a normal or reasonable faculty load and thus they require no additional compensation. Supplemental compensation from a sponsored project may be approved under certain circumstances (usually if the project crosses departmental boundaries). All requests for supplemental compensation must be approved by the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

Summer Compensation - Most sponsors will pay at least some summer salary for faculty with nine-month appointments. It is very important to be aware of agency guidelines relating to summer compensation. University guidelines relating to summer compensation must also be followed. The Grants Office will advise you on sponsor guidelines and on appropriate budgeting.

Matching Funds - Matching funds are real dollars that the University must contribute to the project as part of the budget. Both agencies and foundations offer some granting opportunities in which matching funds are required. The requirement for matching funds should be discussed with the appropriate Division Head or Administrator as soon as the principal investigator is aware of this need. Since the availability of matching funds cannot be guaranteed it is prudent to assure that funds can be set aside even before the proposal is developed.

Cost Sharing - Cost sharing is usually an in-kind contribution, that is an expenditure related to the sponsored project which is already budgeted by the University. This amount is contributed to the project, often as a way of showing institutional support for the project or to make the proposal more competitive. Cost sharing is usually limited to salaries, associated fringe benefits, equipment and indirect costs. Although cost sharing from other categories is possible, it is not encouraged because of the difficulty of maintaining audit records.