Guide to Writing Project Proposals

Business Development Program

Introduction:

Whether you're applying for funding, seeking partnerships, or rallying community support, a solid project proposal helps you get your ideas on paper and into the world. Writing a proposal helps you get clear about what you're doing, why it matters, and how it will work. Even if your idea is simple, projects often fail because they weren't thought through in detail. Your proposal should help others (and yourself) understand how this project will succeed, what risks are involved, and what resources you need.

If someone read your proposal with no prior knowledge of your work, would they understand what the project is, why it's important, how it will be delivered, and what outcomes it will produce? If not, keep refining.

Sections of a Project Proposal

The sections you include in a project proposal will depend on the funding program you are applying to. Make sure you consult the program's application guide to structure yours. The following are suggested components of a project proposal.

Project overview

Start with the "what" and the "why."

- Define the problem your business is facing. Be specific and show why it matters. (e.g. "We currently lose 30% of product due to xyz.")
- Propose a solution that is clear, focused, and practical. How will your project address the problem?
- Explain what makes your choice better, faster, cheaper, or more effective than other options.
- If you are applying for funding, ensure your project clearly aligns with program priorities, goals and intended outcomes.

Background

Describe your current business and how this project fits into it.

- Outline your business goals and why this project helps you reach them.
- Explain how you selected this idea (e.g. SWOT analysis, project matrix)
- Show you've considered other options and why this one makes the most sense.
- Use any supporting evidence to validate your idea: pilot results, early success, data, or letters of support.

Timeline

Lay out your plan step by step.

- Provide a clear start and end date for the project.
- Break it into phases or milestones.
- Identify potential risks (e.g. gear delays, weather, labour availability).

- Describe your backup plan or mitigation strategies.
- This is a great section to include flow charts or tables (ex. a table with project phases, completion dates and expected outcomes for each)

Budget

Make your financial ask make sense.

- List key line items (e.g. equipment, training, software).
- Explain where your cost estimates came from (quotes, catalogues, past projects).
- Clarify the total cost, your contribution, and the amount requested.
- Ensure you consult eligible expenses of the funding program you are applying to

Impacts and Outcomes

Show what the funder will get for their investment.

- Explain how this project will support business growth, cost savings, sustainability, or compliance.
- Include measurable outcomes and how you will track them.
- Show the project has a life beyond the grant. Clearly show that this is not just a one-time fix.

Risk Management

Show you've thought it through.

- Identify possible project or business risks (e.g. supplier delays, climate events).
- Explain how you will manage them or adapt.
- Being honest and proactive shows professionalism.

Funding Request

End with a clear summary.

- Clearly state your funding request (e.g. "I request a $24,000 investment, which represents 50% of the $48,000 project.")
- Tie this back to the value of the project, the outcomes, and the program goals.

Supporting Documents

Include quotes, diagrams, maps or agreements that support your proposal. For example, if you are purchasing a piece of equipment, a diagram and supplier quote would support your proposal.