

PROPOSAL WRITING PRIMER

INTRODUCTION

A comprehensive proposal includes a number of important elements that work together to fully express a brilliant idea. Not all proposal elements are appropriate for all presentation purposes due to constraints of time, space, audience, and media. Yet, it is important that each presentation, though not including all elements, communicates the full opportunity represented by the idea. Three standard configurations for presentation of elements exist short of being a full Business Proposal: Summary, Skeleton, or a Strategy. The full list of proposal elements is as follows:

1. Executive Summary
2. Literature Review
3. Collaborations (Letters Supporting), Overall Plan (Movement), In-Kind Contributions
4. Market Analysis (Demographics & Characteristics)
5. Competition and/or Alternatives
6. Operation Details (Key Objectives & Financial Objectives)
7. Location
8. Management & Project Directors
9. Evaluation Plan & Projections

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary is quite possibly the most artistic of the proposal elements. It is NOT a synopsis of the full proposal, but it does communicate the full proposal in approximately 2 pages. Consider the Executive Summary as a miniature of the full proposal. If a reviewer does not read the full proposal, he/she will have a comprehensive understanding of the idea represented.

1. Executive Summary (2 pages)
 - Motivation Sentence
 - Summarize the problem (1 or 2 sentences)
 - Summarize the solution (1 or 2 sentences)
 - Describe format of rest of proposal (sections, etc.)
 - Market Analysis (Demographics & Characteristics)
 - Competition and/or Alternatives
 - Operation Details (Key Objectives & Financial Objectives)
 - Location
 - Management & Project Directors
 - Evaluation Plan & Projections

Literature Review

2. Literature Review (10% of total pages)
 - What is the history of the problem?
 - Why is this problem interesting?
 - When and why does the problem occur?
 - Is the problem already solved? What is done now?

- Are there any similar systems or solutions to the one you propose? If so, reference and very briefly explain them.
 - Are there are possible improvements to current solutions?
 - Emphasize the significance of the project!
3. Market Analysis (Demographics & Characteristics)
 4. Competition and/or Alternatives
 5. Operation Details (Key Objectives & Financial Objectives)
 6. Location
 7. Management & Project Directors
 8. Evaluation Plan & Projections
 - Goals
 - Opportunities and Challenges
 - Deliverables
 - Timeline (1 paragraph - point-form is suitable)
 - Provide an estimated timeline of project deliverables and important dates.
 - Budget Summary
 - Budget
 - Sustainability/Future Funding Plans

Final Touches

9. Abstract (1 paragraph)
 - Summarize the project including the problem, motivation, and proposed solution, and re-state important (planned) contributions.
10. References and Bibliography
 - List references used to compile proposal and references that will be used for project (if already known).
11. Cover Letter
12. Title Page

Bibliography

WPI projects program – Basic sections of a proposal. (2004). Retrieved September 10, 2006, from Office of Projects Administration - Worcester Polytechnic Institute Web site:
<http://www.wpi.edu/Academics/Projects/Proposal/basicsec.html>

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http://www.fundersonline.org/grantseekers/proposal_basics.html