

# HOW TO WRITE A GRANT PROPOSAL

2025

A grant proposal outlines a project idea, explains why your agency needs funding, and provides evidence demonstrating the project's importance and value to the grantor. To write a successful proposal, it's important to clearly communicate the necessity of your project, the positive impact it will have on the location, community, and/or environment, along with a detailed plan for how the funds will be used, the alignment with the grant's required timeline, and any specific requirements.

## BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

Start developing your project plan beforehand, create an account on [SAM.gov](https://sam.gov) to apply for Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) number<sup>1</sup>, check specific eligibility requirements under the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) while considering each of the following:

- Research and find the right grant on [USDOT Grants](https://www.usdot.gov/grants) or [Grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov)
- Develop an actionable, specific, and meaningful plan
- Consider how your plan will achieve results
- Review the grantor's proposal guidelines
- Use Grants.gov as a resource for guidelines and videos



## BEST PRACTICES

When writing a grant proposal, it's important to focus on effective communication and organizational consistency. This section offers guidelines to enhance the readability and persuasiveness of your proposal, ensuring it stands out to the reviewers. Keep in mind that, although they may require similar content, each grant may follow a different structure, proposal and response requirements, evaluation criteria, and may have additional requirements, such as administrative documents, letters of commitment, and/or federal forms.

### PRECISION AND CLARITY

Eliminate ambiguity, present information in a structured format, and ensure all claims are substantiated.

### STRUCTURE AND FLOW

Follow the specified format, page limitations, and make sure the response follows the same order in which topics are addressed within Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)<sup>2</sup> under the response instructions. For example, don't begin your proposal with the "Community Impact" section if the instructions outline "Overview/Project Description" first.

### RIGOROUS REVIEW

Make sure that each section is addressing every point required in order to submit a fully compliant proposal. Ensure consistency across all sections and formatting restrictions.

### PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS

Take every detail into account by checking eligibility, proposal requirements, evaluation criteria, areas of funding, grant amount, limitations, and other restricting language. Additional information or response requirements are sometimes included within the evaluation criteria details, rather than the proposal response requirements.

<sup>1</sup>This may take 30 days to process.

<sup>2</sup>Grant solicitations are named Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO).

# HOW TO WRITE A GRANT PROPOSAL

## PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

When structuring a grant proposal, you will describe your mission, explain how you plan to use the grant funds, provide project objectives, present a timeline for the project's completion, and outline the expected outcomes. Most grants include these components:

### PREPARE

Carefully review the full NOFO and ensure your proposal adheres to all eligibility criteria and requirements. Stay up-to-date with issued addendums, as non-compliance with the latest updates can disqualify your submission.

### OVERVIEW / PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Clearly provide a project overview and detailed explanation of what the project will entail, this includes resources from personnel to materials and project timeline to whether the project will be executed in phases.

### PROJECT BENEFITS AND IMPACTS

Communicate effectively the project's benefits, including its impact on the location, community, environment, and economy. Highlight how the improvements address current challenges, enhance public safety, reduce emissions, and improve accessibility for under-served populations. Emphasize the broader value of modernization beyond just infrastructure improvements.

### PROJECT READINESS

This section demonstrates your agency's ability to effectively plan, execute, and complete the proposed project within the required timeline, while meeting all necessary reviews, permits, and approvals. This section should communicate confidence in your readiness by highlighting planning, resource allocation, and strategies to address potential challenges.

Key components typically include:

- Feasibility of Work Plan
- Community Engagement and Partnerships
- Leadership and Qualifications
- Environmental and Permitting Considerations
- Activity Schedule and Milestones

### BUDGET JUSTIFICATION

Present a clear, itemized budget that aligns with the project goals, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and adherence to requirements. Unfortunately, you can't simply ask for the maximum amount allotted per applicant without providing documented proof of the projects anticipated costs.

### RISK ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

Outline potential risks to project completion and strategies to address them, including delays, cost overruns, resource shortages, and contingency plans.

### COMMUNICATION PLAN

Develop a plan to keep stakeholders informed, including frequency and methods of updates.

### SUBMISSION TIPS

- **BE UNIFORM** Use a consistent font and margin size, include page numbers and consider adding a table of contents. Charts and graphs should be professionally presented.
- **BE THOROUGH** Double-check that all forms, signatures, and appendices are included. Ensure that any required letters of support or endorsement are enclosed.
- **BE PROFESSIONAL** Craft a cover letter that concisely summarizes the proposal's key points. Tailor the letter to the grantor, showing alignment with their priorities.
- **BE PROACTIVE** Submit the proposal before the due date.

## AWAITING THE OUTCOME

Understand that the grant proposals selection process requires an extensive review of all proposals, so prepare for a wait, knowing that thorough consideration is given to each application. Follow up with the grantor to ensure all criteria were met and check for additional requirements.



Learn more about available grants!