



**BCAAFC** | BC Association of  
Aboriginal Friendship Centres

# Proposal Writing Essentials

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# OVERVIEW

What will we be learning today?

- ✓ Proposal Writing 101: Essential skills to successfully respond to funders' request
- ✓ Tips and tools
- ✓ Exceeding Expectations
- ✓ Ongoing Relationship Building

# TYPES OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

“Calls”, in general, refers to a funder’s request for applicants to a program or initiative. Calls can take many forms, including:

- Letters/Expressions of Intent/Interest
  - Expresses the writer’s interest to bid on a project
- Request for Proposals (RFPs)
  - Frequently without a submission template to follow
- Applications
  - Often a template/format is provided that must be followed

## Funding Types:

- Foundations
- Corporate Funding
- Government Funding
- Microcredit Funding
- Independent Funding Sources

# REVIEWING THE RFP

When reviewing the RFP ensure you make note of:

- ✓ Closing date and time
- ✓ Submission contact details
- ✓ Type of submission
  - ✓ Template
  - ✓ Letter of Intent
  - ✓ Open Written Submission
- ✓ Required Supporting Documents
- ✓ Objectives of Funding

# Approval

- **Seek support** for the proposal.
- Verify approval process and **communicate** that information to the necessary parties.
- Could require:
  - A letter or motion from the Board
  - Any signing authority of the agency
  - Multiple signing authorities of the agency
  - Original signatures
- Proper approval is particularly important with some grants, where the application becomes the binding contract upon approval.
- Send the approving party a **calendar reminder** for one (1) week prior.

# RESEARCH

If this funding opportunity has been available in the past research:

- Is the funding amount the same?
- Who was successful last year
- What kind of projects/programs were successful?

Learn about the agency this funding is being provided through.

- This will help you learn about your proposal review audience
- Give you an idea of over all funding ideas
- Equip you to engage better with the funders

# CONNECTING WITH THE FUNDER

Whenever possible connect with the funder as soon as possible to:

## Confirm Contact Details

- *Who will you be submitting the final applications to?*

## Elevator Pitch

- *Your organization*
- *Your project*
- *Your vision of what this \$ will let you do*

## Check Eligibility

- *Does your project fit within the goals of this funding?*

## Proposal Review Process

- *Ask if there is review criteria available to applicants*
- *Is there an adjudication committee or a single person reviewing the application*

# LETTERS OF SUPPORT

- If the funding opportunity requires letters of support:
  - Connect with your agency's strongest partners and partners you have worked with previously on similar projects
  - Send them a draft/template of information you would like in the letter
    - This can include space for your project goals
    - Length of existing partnership
    - Why partner supports your bid for this process
  - Also let them know of any submission requirements such as
    - On letterhead
    - Signed by certain person in partner agency (ie. President)



# COMPILING SUPPORT DOCUMENTATION

Ten days before your proposal is due:

- Review list of supporting documents again
- Create a checklist
- Gather all supporting documents into one folder
- Format documents/check layout
- Confirm if there are any naming conventions requested by funders

# Outline

- Program Description
- Elevator Pitch and Tagline
- Align Budget and Work Plans
- Exceeding Expectation

# Outcomes and Evaluation

- Work backward from the stated outcomes of the RFP.
- Be sure to include quantitative and qualitative information.
- Only commit to what you can achieve.
- Develop a tool for evaluation during proposal development and include if appropriate.

# Marketing

- Agency should be central, focusing on proven competency and success.
- Use Elevator Pitch and tagline created as part of your project outline.
- Be sure to show how your tagline aligns with the mandate of your agency.
- Embed tagline throughout proposal.
- Mirror tagline in social media postings and related news releases.

# K.I.S.S.

## Keep It Short & Simple

- Only provide requested information.
- Don't repeat information.
- Define local language and regional jargon.
- Stick to your marketing strategy.
- Appreciate the volume of proposals someone may be reading.

# Proofing Your Proposal

- Only have someone proof your final draft; submission quality.
- Look for two (2) types of edits:
  - Grammar, formatting and typos.
  - Content, impact and clarity.

# Final Proofing

- Ensure you have responded to every question.
- Be sure your proposal has page numbers.
- Double check you have all necessary supporting documentation.
- Be sure you've met any special submission requirements
  - Document format: word, pdf, excel, etc.
  - Hardcopies, multiple copies
- Ensure signatures are by the appropriate people

# Delivery

- Confirm required method of delivery, likely email.
- Compile all necessary information/documentation into one (1) email (package).
- Place a request for notification of your email being received, and being read.
- Call to confirm receipt of your proposal with the person representing the funder you originally made contact with at the beginning of the process.
- Don't waste the opportunity of your submission email to sell your project, your enthusiasm and your confidence.



# Relationship with Funder

- The person answering your call during the RFP process is likely not making funding decisions. They are likely your best resource.
- Don't hold a negative result against your contact.
- Request feedback to improve your proposal for next time.
- Remain in contact throughout the funding year and get on any direct mailing lists.

# Common Pitfalls of Proposals

## Concerns from Reviewers:

- To many words, not enough message
  - Keep it short and simple
  - Keep focused and on message
- To many projects/tasks
  - Trying to accomplish too many things in one project
- Application Red Flags
  - Not clear where the money is being spent on the project
  - Too much jargon/acronyms
  - Not following layout/application template
  - Recycled application/support letters

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