LECTURE SESSION SEVEN

PROJECT PROPOSAL WRITING

Lecture Outline

6.1   Introduction

Welcome to this seventh lecture in project proposal. In this lecture, we shall explain the meaning of a project proposal and outline the format. As we explain this term, we shall gain an understanding of project proposal writing skills.

6.2   Learning Outcomes

At the end of this lecture, you should be able to:

 i. Define a project proposal
 ii. Outline the Format (Layout) for a Full Project Proposal
 iii. Develop a Project Proposal

7.3   **Project proposal**

Let us start our discussion by asking ourselves this question.

> **Question 1: Have you ever filled in a form to request for some form of support? If yes , mention them.**

Wonderful! Most of us have used designed forms to request for support. As students you use HELB forms to request for loan. These are proposal forms that have been designed for use by students. A project proposal is a detailed description of a series of activities aimed at solving a certain problem. A proposal outlines the plan of the implementing organization about the project, giving extensive information about the intention for implementing it, the ways to manage it and the results to be delivered from it (FUNDS FOR NGOS 2010).

A project proposal is basically a document that describes a project in detail, as well as the strategy and tactics an organization plans to use to achieve its completion. It is designed to present a plan of action, outline the reasons why the action is necessary, and convince the reader to agree with and approve the implementation of the actions recommended in the body of the document.

A proposal is used to request for financial assistance to implement a project.

In order to be successful, the document should: -

- provide a logical presentation of a research idea

- illustrate the significance of the idea

- show the idea's relationship to past actions

- articulate the activities for the proposed project

Take Note

Proposals for external donors should follow the template or format provided by that specific donor; but should still include these elements in the final draft.

Having looked at the meaning of project proposal, we shall now turn our attention to the layout of a project proposal.

7.4 **Project Proposal layout**

Designing a project proposal is a process consisting of two elements, which are equally important and thus essential to forming a solid project proposal:

- project planning (formulation of project elements)
- proposal writing (converting the plan into a project document)

A full proposal should have the following parts:

- Title page: A title page should appear on proposals longer than three to four pages. The title page should indicate the project title, the name of the lead organization (and potential partners, if any), the place and date of project preparation and the name of the donor agency to which the proposal is addressed.

- Project title: The project title should be short, concise, and preferably refer to a certain key project result or the leading project activity. Project titles that are too long or too general fail to give the reader an effective snapshot of what is inside.

- Abstract/Executive Summary: Many readers lack the time needed to read the whole project proposal. It is therefore useful to insert a short project summary, an abstract or executive summary. The abstract should include: the problem statement, the project's objectives, implementing organisations; key project activities; and potentially the total project budget. Theoretically, the abstract should be compiled after the relevant items already exist in their long form. For a small project the abstract may not be longer than 10 lines. Bigger projects often provide abstracts as long as two pages.

- Context/Background: This part of the project describes the social, economic, political and cultural background from which the project is initiated. It should contain relevant data from research carried out in the project planning phase or collected from other sources.

- Project justification: A rationale should be provided for the project. Due to its importance, this section is sometimes divided into four or more sub-sections:

  o Problem statement: The problem statement provides a description of the specific problem(s) the project is trying to solve, in order to "make a case" for the project. Furthermore, the project proposal should point out why a certain issue is a problem for the community or society as a whole, i.e. what negative implications affect the target group. There should also be an explanation of the needs of the target group that appear as a direct consequence of the described problem.

  o Priority needs: The needs of the target group that have arisen as a direct negative impact of the problem should be prioritized. An explanation as to how this decision was reached must also be included.

  o The proposed approach (type of intervention): The project proposal should describe the strategy chosen for solving the problem and precisely how it will lead to improvement.

  o The implementing organization: This section should describe the capabilities of your organization by referring to its capacity and previous project record. Describe why exactly your organization is the most appropriate to run the project, its connection to the local community, the constituency behind the organization and what kind of expertise the organization can provide. If other partners are involved in implementation provide some information on their capacity as well.

  o Project aims: This information should be obtained from the Log frame Matrix, including the project goal (a general aim that should explain what the core problem is and why the project is important, i.e. what the long-term benefits to the target group are), project purpose (that should address the core problem in terms of the benefits to be received by the project beneficiaries or target group as a direct result

of the project) and the outputs (i.e. results describe the services or products to be delivered to the intended beneficiaries).

- Target group: define the target group and show how it will benefit from the project. The project should provide a detailed description of the size and characteristics of the target groups, and especially of direct project beneficiaries.

- Project impleementation: The implementation plan should describe activities and resource allocation in as much detail as possible. It is exceptionally important to provide a good overview of *who* is going to implement the project's activities, as well as when and where. The implementation plan may be divided into two key elements: the activity plan and the resource plan. The activity plan should include specific information and explanations of each of the planned project activities. The duration of the project should be clearly stated, with considerable detail on the beginning and the end of the project. In general, two main formats are used to express the activity plan: a simple table (a simple table with columns for activities, sub-activities, tasks, timing and responsibility in a clear and readily understandable format) and the Gantt chart(a universal format for presenting activities in certain times frames, shows the dependence and sequence for each activity. The resource plan should provide information on the means necessary to undertake the project. Cost categories are established at this stage in order to aggregate and summarize the cost information for budgeting.

- Budget An itemized summary of an organization's expected income and expenses over a specified period of time.

- Monitoring and Evaluation: The basis for *minitoring* is set when the *indicators* for results are set. The project proposal should indicate: how and when the project management team will conduct activities to monitor the project's progress; which methods will be used to monitor and evaluate; and *who* will do the evaluation.

- Reporting: The schedule of project progress and financial report could be set in the project proposal. Often these obligations are determined by the standard requirements of the donor agency. The project report may be compiled in different versions, with regard to the audience they are targeting.

- Management and personnel: A brief description should be given of the project personnel, the individual roles each one has assumed, and the communication mechanisms that exist between them. All the additional information (such as CVs) should be attached to the annexes.

Having looked at the format of a project proposal, we shall now turn our attention to writing a project proposal.

Activity

Identify the main parts of a proposal document you used recently (e.g HELB form)

Well done. You have understood the main parts of a project proposal. Let us now develop a project proposal.

5.5 Project Proposal Writing

A project proposal begins from the vision that an institution or an individual has.

- The first step is to decide what the problem is and develop a rough idea of how this could be solved. This is then to be transformed into an idea for a specific project proposal. Remember that your idea may have to fit certain requirements if you are answering to a call for proposals, and that it must also fit local policies and frameworks

- Identify potential funding options: It is necessary to find out in advance what sources of funding are available, through governments, international cooperation agencies, some international NGOs or private foundations.

- Build a project proposal team (adapted from PHILIP et al. 2008): a leader will be needed to manage the proposal development in an efficient way, and therefore it is advisable to assign the lead role to one specific person. This person is then responsible for the coordination of the overall proposal development, for communication with potential funders and for making sure that all different pieces of input are brought together in a consistent and coherent text.

- Hold a kick-off meeting: It is helpful to discuss and develop the proposal in a small team and share drafts with experts of all relevant disciplines not just from within the administration, but also from outside it. Input from stakeholders or other specialists with different background helps bring in the necessary expertise, but also a larger variety of ideas on how to solve a particular issue and achieve the previously agreed objectives.

5.7   Summary

We have come to the end of lecture seven. This lecture laid the background on development of a project proposal.

5.8   Review Activity

1. Outline the importance of a project proposal

2. List the important parts of a 'full' project proposal.

5.9 References and Further Reading

Desai, V. & Potter, R. (2014). The Companion to Development Studies. (3rd Ed.). London: Routledge. ISBN-13:978-1444167245.