

Proposals

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A proposal is an offer to do something or a recommendation that something be done. A proposal's general purpose is to *persuade* readers to improve conditions, authorize work on a project, accept a service or product (for payment), or otherwise support a plan for solving a problem or doing a job.

Your own proposal may be a letter to your school board to suggest changes in the English curriculum; it may be a memo to your firm's vice president to request funding for a training program for new employees; or it may be a 1,000-page document to the Defense Department to bid for a missile contract (competing with proposals from other firms). You might write the proposal alone or as part of a team. It might take hours or months.

PURPOSE OF PROPOSALS

Whether in science, business, industry, government, or education, proposals are written for decision makers: managers, executives, directors, clients, trustees, board members, community leaders, and the like. Inside or outside your organization, these are the people who decide whether your suggestions are worthwhile, whether your project ever will materialize, whether your service or product is useful. If your job depends on funding from out-

side soon. Proposals might be the most important documents you produce.

THE PROPOSAL PROCESS

The basic proposal process can be summarized simply: someone offers a plan for something that needs to be done. In business and government, this process has three stages:

1. Client *X* needs a service or product.
2. Firms *A*, *B*, *C* propose a plan for meeting the need.
3. Client *X* awards the job to the firm offering the best proposal.

The complexity of each phase will of course depend on the situation. Here is a typical situation:

Assume that you manage a mining engineering firm in Tulsa, Oklahoma. On Wednesday, February 19, you spot this announcement in the *Commerce Business Daily*:¹

R—Development of Alternative Solutions to Acid Mine Water Contamination from Abandoned Lead and Zinc Mines near Tar Creek, Neosho River, Ground Lake, and the Boone and Roubidoux aquifers in northeastern Oklahoma. This will include assessment of environmental impacts of mine drainage followed by development and evaluation of alternate solutions to alleviate acid mine drainage in receiving streams. An optional portion of the contract, to be bid upon as an add-on and awarded at the discretion of the OWRB, will be to prepare an Environmental Impact Assessment for each of three alternative solutions as selected by the OWRB. The project is expected to take 6 months to accomplish, with anticipated completion date of September 30, 19XX. The projected effort for the required task is 30 person-months. Requests for proposals will be issued and copies provided to interested sources upon receipt of a written request. Proposals are due March 1, 19XX. (044)

¹This daily publication lists the government's latest needs for services (salvage, engineering, maintenance) and for supplies, equipment, and materials (guided missiles, engine parts, building materials, and so on). The *Commerce Business Daily* is an essential reference tool for anyone whose firm seeks government contracts.

The *Grantsmanship Center News*, published six times yearly, contains a wealth of information about federal grants for nonprofit organizations in areas such as rural development, media, science, energy and environment, and education. This publication also lists notices of training programs in proposal writing, and offers books on proposal writing and evaluation, along with bibliographies of publications about the proposal process.

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Your firm has the personnel, experience, and time to do the job, and so you decide to compete for the contract. Because the March 1 deadline is fast approaching, you write immediately for a copy of the request for proposal (RFP). The RFP will give you the guidelines for developing the proposal—guidelines for spelling out your plan to solve the problem (methods, time-tables, costs).

You receive a copy of the RFP on February 21—only one week before deadline. You get right to work, with the two staff engineers you have appointed to your proposal team. Because the credentials of your staff could affect the client's acceptance of the proposal, you ask team members to update their résumés (for inclusion in an appendix to the proposal).

Several other firms will be competing for this project. The client will award it to the firm submitting the best proposal, based on the following criteria (and perhaps others):

- understanding of the client's needs, as described in the RFP
- soundness of the firm's technical approach
- quality of the project's organization and management
- ability to complete the job by the deadline
- ability to control costs
- specialized experience of the firm in this type of work
- qualifications of staff to be assigned to the project
- the firm's record for similar projects

A client's specific evaluation criteria often are listed (in order of importance or on a point scale) in the RFP. Although these criteria may vary, every client expects a proposal that is *clear, informative, and realistic*.

Some clients hold a preproposal conference for the competing firms. During this briefing, the firms are informed of the client's needs, expectations, specific start-up and completion dates, criteria for evaluation, and any other details that might help guide proposal development.

In most cases, the merits of your proposed plan are judged *solely* by what you have *on paper*. This reality is summed up in the advice below from a government publication that solicits proposals.

[Proposal] reviewers will base their conclusions only on information contained in the proposal. It cannot be assumed that readers are acquainted with the firm or key individuals or any referred-to experiments.²

Make any proposal able to stand alone in meaning and persuasiveness.

PROPOSAL TYPES

Despite their variety, proposals are classified in three ways: according to *origin*, *audience*, or *intention*. Based on its origin, a proposal is either *solicited* or *unsolicited*—that is, requested by an employer or potential client or initiated on your own because you have recognized a need. Business and government proposals usually are solicited, and they originate from a customer's request (as shown in the sample situation on pages 517–519).

Based on its audience, a proposal may be *internal* or *external*—written for members of your organization or for clients and funding agencies. (The situation on pages 522–523 calls for an external proposal.)

Based on its intention, a proposal may be a *planning*, *research*, or *sales* proposal. These last categories by no means account for all variations among proposals. Some proposals may in fact fall within all three categories, but these are the types you most likely will have to write. A discussion of each type follows.

The Planning Proposal

A planning proposal suggests ways of solving a problem or bringing about improvement. It might be a request for funding to expand the campus newspaper, an architectural plan for new facilities at a ski area, or a plan to develop energy alternatives to fossil fuels. The successful planning proposal always answers this main question for readers:

- *What are the benefits of following your suggestions?*

The planning proposal that follows is external and solicited. The XYZ Corporation has contracted a team of communication consultants to design in-house writing workshops. The consultants need to persuade the reader that their methods are likely to succeed. In their proposal, addressed to the company's education officer, the consultants offer concrete and specific solutions to clearly identified problems.

²*Small Business Innovation Research Program* (Washington: U.S. Department of Defense, 1983): 9.

After a brief introduction summarizing the problem, our writers develop their proposal under two headings, "Assessment of Needs" and "Proposed Plan."

Under "Proposed Plan," subheadings offer an even more specific forecast. The "Limitations" section shows that our writers are careful to promise no more than they can deliver.

Because this proposal is external, it is cast in letter form. Notice, however, that the word choice ("thanks," "what we're doing," "Jack and Terry") creates an informal, familiar tone. Such a tone is appropriate in this external document because the writers and reader have spent many hours in conferences, luncheons, and phone conversations.

Planning Proposal

States purpose

Dear Mary:

Identifies problem

Thanks for sending the writing samples from your technical support staff. Here is what we're doing to design a realistic approach.

Assessment of Needs

Proposes solution

After conferring with technicians in both Jack's and Terry's groups, and analyzing their writing samples, we identified this hierarchy of needs:

- improving readability
- achieving precise diction
- summarizing information
- organizing a set of procedures
- formulating various memo reports
- analyzing audiences for upward communication
- writing persuasive bids for transfer or promotion
- writing persuasive suggestions

Proposed Plan

Details what will be done

Based on the needs listed above, we have limited our instruction package to eight carefully selected and readily achievable goals.

Course Outline. Our eight 2-hour sessions are structured as follows:

1. achieving sentence clarity
2. achieving sentence conciseness
3. achieving fluency and precise diction
4. writing summaries and abstracts
5. outlining manuals and procedures
6. editing manuals and procedures

7. designing various reports for various purposes
8. analyzing the audience and writing persuasively

Classroom Format. The first three meetings will be lecture-intensive with weekly exercises to be done at home and edited collectively in class. The remaining five weeks will combine lecture and exercises with group editing of work-related documents. We plan to remain flexible so we can respond to needs that arise.

Details how it will be done

Limitations

Given our limited contact time, we cannot realistically expect to turn out a batch of polished communicators. By the end of the course, however, our students will have begun to appreciate writing as a deliberate process.

Sets realistic expectations

If you have any suggestions for refining this plan, please let us know.

Encourages reader response

The Research Proposal

Research (or grant) proposals request approval (and often funding) for a research project. A chemistry professor might address a research proposal to the Environmental Protection Agency for funds to identify toxic contaminants in local groundwater. Research proposals are solicited by many government and private agencies: National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and others. Each granting agency has its own requirements for proposal format and content, but any successful research proposal answers these questions:

- *Why is this project worthwhile?*
- *What qualifies you to undertake the project?*
- *What are its chances of succeeding?*

In college, you might submit proposals for independent study, field study, or a thesis project. Here is the title of a research proposal submitted to the thesis committee in a geology department:

PROPOSAL FOR A MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT TO INVESTIGATE THE TERTIARY GEOLOGY OF THE ST. MARIES RIVER DRAINAGE FROM ST. MARIES TO CLARKIA, IDAHO

A technical writing student might submit an informal proposal requesting the instructor's approval for a term project (which, in turn, may be a formal proposal). The introduction of the next proposal describes the problem and justifies the need for the study. The body outlines the scope, method, and sources for the proposed investigation. The conclusion describes the goal of the investigation and encourages reader support. This

proposal is convincing because it answers questions about *what*, *why*, *how*, *when*, and *where*. Because this proposal is internal, it is cast informally as a memo.

Research Proposal

March 16, 1993

TO: Dr. John Lannon
FROM: T. Sorrells Dewoody
SUBJECT: Proposal for Determining the Feasibility of Marketing Dead Western White Pine

Introduction

Over the past four decades, huge losses of western white pine have occurred in the northern Rockies, primarily attributable to white pine blister rust and the attack of the mountain pine beetle. Estimated annual mortality is 318 million board feet. Because of the low natural resistance of white pine to blister rust, this high mortality rate is expected to continue indefinitely.

If white pine is not harvested while the tree is dying or soon after death, the wood begins to dry and check (warp and crack). The sapwood is discolored by blue stain, a fungus carried by the mountain pine beetle. If the white pine continues to stand after death, heart cracks develop. These factors work together to cause degradation of the lumber and consequent loss in value.

Statement of Problem

White pine mortality reduces the value of white pine stumpage, because the commercial lumber market will not accept it. The major implications of this problem are two: first, in the face of rising demand for wood, vast amounts of timber lie unused; second, dead trees are left to accumulate in the woods, where they are rapidly becoming a major fire hazard here in northern Idaho and elsewhere.

Proposed Solution

One possible solution to the problem of white pine mortality and waste is to search for markets other than the conventional lumber market. The last few years have seen a burst of popularity and growing demand for weathered barn boards and wormy pine for interior paneling. Some firms around the country are marketing defective wood as specialty products. (These firms call the wood from which their products come "distressed," a term I will use hereafter to refer to dead and defective white pine.) Distressed white pine quite possibly will find a place in such a market.

Scope

To assess the feasibility of developing a market for distressed white pine, I plan to pursue six areas of inquiry:

Defines scope of the proposed study

1. What products are presently being produced from dead wood, and what are the approximate costs of production?
2. How large is the demand for distressed-wood products?
3. Can distressed white pine meet this demand as well as other species meet it?
4. Does the market contain room for distressed white pine?
5. What are the costs of retrieving and milling distressed white pine?
6. What prices for the products can the market bear?

Methods

My primary data sources will include consultations with Dr. James Hill, Professor of Wood Utilization, and Dr. Sven Bergman, Forest Economist—both members of the College of Forestry, Wildlife, and Range. I will also inspect decks of dead white pine at several locations, and visit a processing mill to evaluate it as a possible base of operations. I will round out my primary research with a letter and telephone survey of processors and wholesalers of distressed material.

Describes how study will be done

Secondary sources will include publications on the uses of dead timber, and a review of a study by Dr. Hill on the uses of dead white pine.

My Qualifications

I have been following Dr. Hill's study on dead white pine for two years. In June of this year I will receive my B.S. in forest management. I am familiar with wood milling processes and have firsthand experience at logging. My association with Drs. Hill and Bergman gives me the opportunity for an in-depth feasibility study.

Gives the writer's qualifications for this project

Conclusion

Clearly, action is needed to reduce the vast accumulations of dead white pine in our forests. The land on which they stand is among the most productive forests in northern Idaho. By addressing the six areas of inquiry mentioned earlier, I can determine the feasibility of directing capital and labor to the production of distressed white pine products. With your approval I will begin research at once.

Encourages reader acceptance

The Sales Proposal

A sales proposal offers a service or product. Sales proposals may be solicited or unsolicited. If they are solicited, several firms may compete with proposals of their own. Because sales proposals are addressed to readers outside your organization, they are cast as letters (if they are brief). But long

sales proposals, like long reports, are formal documents with supplements (cover letter, title page, table of contents).

The sales proposal, a major marketing tool in business and industry, will be successful if it answers this question:

- *How will you serve our needs better than your competitors?*
or
- *Why should we hire you instead of someone else?*

The following solicited proposal offers a service. Because the writer is competing with other firms, he explains specifically *why* his machinery is best for the job, *how* the job can best be completed, *what* his qualifications are for getting the job done, and *how much* the job will cost. He will be legally bound by his estimate. To protect himself, he points out possible causes of increased costs. *Never underestimate costs by failing to account for all variables*—a sure way to lose money or clients.

The introduction describes the subject and purpose of the proposal. The conclusion reinforces the confident tone throughout and encourages readers' acceptance by ending with—and thus emphasizing—two vital words: "economically" and "efficiently."

Sales Proposal

SUBJECT: Proposal to Dig a Trench and Move Boulders at Site Ten Miles West of Bliss

Dear Mr. Haver:

I've inspected your property and would be happy to undertake the landscaping project necessary for the development of your farm.

The backhoe I use cuts a span 3 feet wide and can dig as deep as 18 feet—more than an adequate depth for the mainline pipe you wish to lay. Because this backhoe is on tracks rather than tires, and is hydraulically operated, it is particularly efficient in moving rocks. I have more than twelve years of experience with backhoe work and have completed many jobs similar to this one.

After examining the huge boulders that block access to your property, I am convinced they can be moved only if I dig out underneath and exert upward pressure with the hydraulic ram while you push forward on the boulders with your D-9 Caterpillar. With this method, we can move enough rock to enable you to farm that now inaccessible tract. Because of its power, my larger backhoe will save you both time and money in the long run.

Offers to do
the job

Gives the writer's
qualifications

Explains how job
will be done

This job should take 12 to 15 hours, unless we encounter subsurface ledge formations. My fee is \$100 an hour. The fact that I provide my own dynamiting crew at no extra charge should be an advantage to you because you have so much rock to be moved.

Gives a *qualified* cost estimate

Please phone me anytime for more information. I'm sure we can do the job economically and efficiently.

Encourages reader acceptance

The proposal categories (planning, research, and sales) discussed in this section are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive. A research proposal, for example, may request funds for a study that will lead to a planning proposal. The Vista proposal partially shown on pages 524–528 is a combined planning and sales proposal: if clients accept the writer's preliminary plan, they will hire the firm to install the automated system.

PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

Readers will evaluate your proposal according to how clearly, informatively, and realistically you answer these questions:

- *What are you proposing?*
- *What problem will you solve?*
- *Why is your plan worthwhile?*
- *What is unique about your plan?*
- *What are your (or your firm's) credentials?*
- *How will the plan be implemented?*
- *How long will the project take to complete?*
- *How much will it cost?*
- *How will we benefit if we accept your plan?*

In addition to answering the questions above, successful proposal writers adhere to the following guidelines.

Design an Accessible and Appealing Format

Format is the *look* of a document, including such features as

- the layout of words and graphics
- typeface, type size, and white space
- highlights and lists
- headings

these
features.
A poorly designed proposal suggests to readers the writer's careless at-
titude toward the project.

Signal Your Intent with a Clear Title

Decision makers are busy people who have no time for guessing-games.
The title should clearly signal the proposal's purpose and content.

Unclear PROPOSED OFFICE PROCEDURES FOR VISTA
FREIGHT, INC.

What kinds of office procedures are being proposed? This title is too broad.

Revised A PROPOSAL FOR AUTOMATING VISTA'S FREIGHT
BILLING SYSTEM

Don't write "Recommended Improvements" when you mean "Recommended Wastewater Treatment." A specific and comprehensive title signals the proposal's intent.

Include Supporting Material and Appropriate Supplements

Both short and long proposals may include supporting materials (maps, blueprints, specifications, calculations, and so forth). Place supporting material in an appendix (pages 377–379), to avoid interrupting the discussion.

Depending on your readers, appropriate supplements (pages 367–379) for a long proposal might include a title page, cover letter, table of contents, summary, abstract, and appendixes. Readers with various responsibilities will be interested in different parts of your proposal: Some know about the problem and will read only your plan; some look only at the summary; others will study recommendations or costs; and still others need all the details. If you're unsure as to which supplements to include in an internal proposal, ask the intended reader(s) or study other proposals. For a solicited proposal (one written for an outside agency) follow the agency's instructions *exactly*.

Focus on the Problem and the Objective

Readers want specific suggestions for filling specific needs. Their biggest question is "What's in this for me?" Show them you understand their problem and offer a plan for improving their products, sales, or services.

Notice how proposal writer Gerald Beaulieu focuses on Vista's inefficient office procedures, and then outlines specific solutions.

Statement of the Problem

Vista provides two services. (1) It locates freight carriers for its clients. The carriers, in turn, pay Vista a 6 percent commission for each referral. (2) Vista handles all shipping paperwork for its clients. For this auditing service, clients pay Vista a monthly retainer.

Gives background

Although Vista's business has increased steadily for the past three years, record-keeping, accounting, and other paperwork still are done *manually*. These inefficiencies have caused a number of problems, including late billings, lost commissions, and poor account maintenance. Unless its office procedures are updated, Vista stands to lose clients.

Describes problem and its effects

Objective

This proposal offers a realistic and efficient plan for Vista to streamline office procedures. We first identify the burden imposed on your staff by the current system, and then we show how to reduce inefficiency, eliminate client complaints, and improve your cash flow by automating most office procedures.

Enables readers to visualize results

Treat Contingencies and Limitations Realistically

Do not underestimate the project's complexity. Identify contingencies (occurrences subject to chance) readers might not anticipate, and propose realistic methods for dealing with the unexpected. Here is how the Vista proposal qualifies its promises:

Assesses contingencies realistically

As outlined below, Vista can realize tangible benefits by automating office procedures. But, as countless firms have learned, imposing automated procedures on a staff can create severe morale problems—particularly among senior staff who feel coerced. To diminish employee resistance, invite your staff to comment on this proposal. To help avoid hardware and software problems once the system is operational, we have included recommendations and a budget for staff training. (Firms have learned that inadequate training is counterproductive to the automation process.)

If the best available solutions have limitations, let readers know. Otherwise, you and your firm could be liable in the case of project failure. Avoid overstatement. Notice how the above solutions are qualified ("diminish" and "help avoid" instead of "eliminate") so as not to promise more than the writer can deliver. Ethical communication is essential.

been more vigilant.

Here is a more diplomatic version:

Vista's manual office procedures have resulted in an inefficient flow of information. The problems include repetitive tasks, late billings, lost documents, and poor account maintenance.

Analyze Audience Needs

Proposals address diverse audiences. A research proposal might be read by experts, who would then advise the granting agency whether to accept or reject it. Planning and sales proposals might be read by colleagues, superiors, and clients (often laypersons). Informed and expert readers will be most interested in the technical details. Nontechnical readers will be interested in the expected results, but will need an explanation of technical details as well. Learn all you can about the needs, interests, and biases of your audience.

If the primary audience is expert or informed, keep the proposal itself technical. For uninformed secondary readers (if any), provide an informative abstract, a glossary, and appendixes explaining specialized information. If the primary audience has no expertise and the secondary audience does, follow this pattern: write the proposal itself for laypersons, and provide appendixes with the technical details (formulas, specifications, calculations) that the informed readers will use to evaluate your plan.

A GENERAL MODEL FOR PROPOSALS

Like all informative writing, proposals are organized into these main sections: introduction, body, and conclusion. Depending on project complexity, each section has some or all of the subsections listed in the following general outline:

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Statement of Problem and Objective
- B. Background
- C. Need
- D. Benefits

- E. Qualifications of Personnel
- F. Data Sources
- G. Limitations and Contingencies
- H. Scope

II. BODY

- A. Methods
- B. Timetable
- C. Materials and Equipment
- D. Personnel
- E. Available Facilities
- F. Needed Facilities
- G. Cost
- H. Expected Results
- I. Feasibility

III. CONCLUSION

- A. Summary of Key Points
- B. Request for Action

Headings can be rearranged, combined, divided, or deleted as needed. Not every proposal has all subsections, but each major section must answer specific readers' questions, as illustrated next.

Introduction

The introduction answers all these questions—or all those that apply to the situation:

- *What problem do you propose to solve?*
- *In general, what solution are you proposing?*
- *Why are you proposing it?*
- *What are the benefits?*
- *What are your qualifications for this project?*

From the beginning, your goal is to sell your idea, to persuade readers the job needs doing and you are the one to do it. If your introduction is long-winded, evasive, or vague, readers might stop reading. Make it concise, specific, and clear.

Spell out the problem to make it clear to the audience—and to show you understand it fully. Explain the benefits of solving the problem or undertaking the project. Identify any sources of data. In a research or sales proposal, state your qualifications for doing the job. If your plan has limi-

tations or contingencies, explain them. Finally, give the scope of your plan by listing the subsections to be discussed in the body section.

Following is the introduction for a planning proposal titled "A Proposal for Solving the Noise Problem in the University Library." Jill Sanders, a library work-study student, addresses her proposal to the chief librarian and the administrative staff. Because this proposal is unsolicited, it must first make the problem vivid through details that arouse concern and interest. This introduction is longer than it would be in a solicited proposal, whose readers would already agree on the severity of the problem.

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Concise descriptions of problem and objective immediately alert readers

During the October 19XX Convocation at Margate University, students and faculty members complained about noise in the library. Soon afterward, areas were designated for "quiet study," but complaints about noise continue. To create a scholarly atmosphere, the library should take immediate action to decrease noise.

Objective

This proposal examines the noise problem from the viewpoint of students, faculty, and library staff. It then offers a plan to make areas of the library quiet enough for serious study and research.

Sources

This section comes early because it is referred to in next section

My data come from a university-wide questionnaire, interviews with students, faculty, and library staff, inquiry letters to other college libraries, and my own observations for three years on the library staff.

Details of the Problem

Details enable readers to understand problem

This subsection examines the severity and causes of the noise.

Severity. Since the 19XX Convocation, the library's fourth and fifth floors have been reserved for quiet study, but students hold group-study sessions at the large tables and disturb others working alone. The constant use of computer terminals on both floors adds to the noise, especially when students converse. Moreover, people often chat as they enter or leave study areas.

On the second and third floors, designed for reference, staff help patrons locate materials, causing constant shuffling of people and books, as well as loud conversation. At the computer service desk on the third floor, conferences between students and instructors create more noise.

The most frequently voiced complaint from the faculty members interviewed was about the second floor, where people using the Reference and Government Documents services converse loudly. Students complain about the lack of a quiet spot to study, especially in the evening, when even the "quiet" floors are as noisy as the dorms.

Shows how campus feels about problem

More than 80 percent of respondents (530 undergraduates, 30 faculty, 22 graduate students) to a university-wide questionnaire (Appendix A) insisted that excessive noise discourages them from using the library as often as they would prefer. Of the student respondents, 430 cited quiet study as their primary reason for wishing to use the library.

Shows concern is widespread and pervasive

The library staff recognizes the problem but has insufficient personnel. Because all staff members have assigned tasks, they have no time to monitor noise in their sections.

Causes. Respondents complained specifically about these causes of noise (in descending order of frequency):

1. Loud study groups that often lapse into social discussions.
2. General disrespect for the library, with some students' attitudes characterized as "rude," "inconsiderate," or "immature."
3. The constant clicking of computer terminals on all five floors, and of typewriters on the first three.
4. Vacuuming by the evening custodians.

Identifies specific causes

All complaints converged on lack of enforcement by library staff.

Because the day staff works on the first three floors, quiet-study rules are not enforced on the fourth and fifth floors. Work-study students on these floors have no authority to enforce rules not enforced by the regular staff. Small, black-and-white "Quiet Please" signs posted on all floors go unnoticed, and the evening security guard provides no deterrent.

Needs

Excessive noise in the library is keeping patrons away. By addressing this problem immediately, we can help restore the library's credibility and utility as a campus resource. We must reduce noise on the lower floors and eliminate it from the quiet-study floors.

This statement of need evolves logically and persuasively from earlier evidence

Scope

The proposed plan includes a detailed assessment of methods, costs and materials, personnel requirements, feasibility, and expected results.

Previews the plan

Body

The body (or plan) section of your proposal will receive most attention from readers. It answers all these questions that are applicable:

- *How will it be done?*
- *When will it be done?*
- *What materials, methods, and personnel will it take?*
- *What facilities are available?*
- *How long will it take?*
- *How much will it cost, and why?*
- *What results can we expect?*
- *How do we know it will work?*
- *Who will do it?*

Here you spell out your plan in enough detail for readers to evaluate its soundness. If this section is vague, your proposal stands no chance of being accepted. Be sure your plan is realistic and promises no more than you can deliver. The main goal of this section is to prove that your plan will work.

PROPOSED PLAN

This plan takes into account the needs and wishes of our campus community, as well as the available facilities in our library.

Methods

Tells how plan will be implemented

Describes first phase

Describes second phase

Noise in the library can be reduced in three complementary phases: (1) improving publicity, (2) shutting down and modifying our facilities, and (3) enforcing the quiet rules.

Improving Publicity. First, the library must publicize the noise problem. This assertive move will demonstrate the staff's interest. Publicity could include articles by staff members in the campus newspaper, leaflets distributed on campus, and a freshman library orientation acknowledging the noise problem and asking cooperation from new students. All forms of publicity should detail the steps being taken by the library to solve the problem.

Shutting Down and Modifying Facilities. After notifying campus and local newspapers, you should close the library for one week. To minimize disruption, the shutdown should occur between the end of summer school and the beginning of the fall term.

During this period, you can convert the fixed tables on the fourth and fifth floors to cubicles with temporary partitions (six cubicles per table). You could later convert the cubicles to shelves as the need increases.

Then you can take all unfixed tables from the upper floors to the first floor, and set up a space for group study. Plans already are under way for removing the computer terminals from the fourth and fifth floors.

Enforcing the Quiet Rules. Enforcement is the essential, long-term element in this plan. No one of any age is likely to follow all the rules all the time—unless the rules are enforced.

Describes third phase

First, you can make new "Quiet" posters to replace the present, innocuous notices. A visual-design student can be hired to draw up large, colorful posters that attract attention. Either the design student or the university print shop can take charge of poster production.

Next, through publicity, library patrons can be encouraged to demand quiet from noisy people. To support such patron demands, the library staff can begin monitoring the fourth and fifth floors, asking study groups to move to the first floor, and revoking library privileges of those who refuse. Patrons on the second and third floors can be asked to speak in whispers. Staff members should set an example by regulating their own voices.

Costs and Materials

- The major cost would be for salaries of new staff members who would help monitor. Next year's library budget, however, will include an allocation for four new staff members.
- A design student has offered to make up four different posters for \$200. The university printing office can reproduce as many posters as needed at no additional cost.
- Prefabricated cubicles for 26 tables sell for \$150 apiece, for a total cost of \$3,900.
- Rearrangement on various floors can be handled by the library's custodians.

Estimates costs and materials needed

The Student Fee Allocations Committee and the Student Senate routinely reserve funds for improving student facilities. A request to these organizations presumably would yield at least partial funding for the plan.

Personnel

The success of this plan ultimately depends on the willingness of the library administration to implement it. You can run the program itself by committees

Describes personnel needed

made up of students, staff, and faculty. This is yet another area where publicity is essential to persuade people that the problem is severe and that you need their help. To recruit committee members from among students, you can offer Contract Learning credits.

The proposed committees include an Antinoise Committee overseeing the program, a Public Relations Committee, a Poster Committee, and an Enforcement Committee.

Feasibility

On March 15, 19XX, I mailed survey letters to 25 New England colleges, inquiring about their methods for coping with noise in the library. Among the respondents, 16 stated that publicity and the administration's attitude toward enforcement were main elements in their success.

Improved publicity and enforcement could work for us as well. And slight modifications in our facilities, to concentrate group study on the busiest floors, would automatically lighten the burden of enforcement.

Benefits

Publicity will improve communication between the library and the campus. An assertive approach will show that the library is aware of its patrons' needs and willing to meet those needs. Offering the program for public inspection will draw the entire community into improvement efforts. Publicity, begun now, will pave the way for the formation of committees.

The library shutdown will have a dual effect: it will dramatize the problem to the community, and also provide time for the physical changes. (An antinoise program begun with carpentry noise in the quiet areas would hardly be effective.) The shutdown will be both a symbolic and a concrete measure, leading to reopening of the library with a new philosophy and a new image.

Continued strict enforcement will be the backbone of the program. It will prove that staff members care enough about the atmosphere to jeopardize their friendly image in the eyes of some users, and that the library is not afraid to enforce its rules.

Conclusion

The conclusion reaffirms the need for the project and persuades readers to act. It answers the questions readers will ask:

- *How badly do we need this change?*

Assesses probability of success

Offers a realistic and persuasive forecast of benefits

- Why should we accept your proposal?
- How do we know this is the best plan?

End on a strong note, with a conclusion that is assertive, confident, and encouraging—and keep it short.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The noise in Margate University library has become embarrassing and annoying to the whole campus. Forceful steps are needed to restore the academic atmosphere.

Aside from the intangible question of image, close inspection of the proposed plan will show that it will work if you take the recommended steps and—most important—if daily enforcement of quiet rules becomes a part of the library's services.

Re-emphasizes need and feasibility and encourages action

In long proposals, especially those beginning with a comprehensive abstract, the conclusion can be omitted.

A SAMPLE SITUATION

The formal planning proposal in Figure 22.2 typifies the kind of specialized proposal that justifies a funding request.

The situation: A university newspaper is struggling to meet rising costs. The paper's yearly budget is funded by a college allocations committee that disburses money to all student organizations. Because of revenue cuts throughout the university, the newspaper has received no funding increase in three years.

Bill Trippe is the newspaper's business manager. His task is to justify a requested increase of seventeen percent for the coming year's budget. Before drafting his proposal, Bill constructs a detailed profile of his audience (based on the worksheet, page 60).

Audience-and-Use Profile for a Formal Proposal

AUDIENCE IDENTITY AND NEEDS

My primary audience includes all members of the allocations committee. My secondary audience is the newspaper staff, who will implement the proposed plan—if it is approved by the allocations committee.

The primary audience will use my document as perhaps the sole basis for deciding whether to grant the additional funds. Most of these readers have overseen the newspaper budget for years, and so they already know quite a bit

A Budget Proposal for the SMU *Torch* (1993-94)

Prepared for
The Student Fee Allocation Committee
Southeastern Massachusetts University
North Dartmouth, Massachusetts

by
William Trippe
Torch Business Manager

May 1, 1993

The SMU Torch

Old Westport Road
North Dartmouth, Massachusetts 02747

May 1, 1993

Charles Marcus, Chair
Student Fee Allocation Committee
Southeastern Massachusetts University
North Dartmouth, MA 02747

Dear Dean Marcus:

No one needs to be reminded about the effects of increased costs on our campus community. We are all faced with having to make do with less.

Accordingly, we at the *Torch* have spent long hours devising a plan to cope with increased production costs—without compromising the newspaper's tradition of quality service. I think you and your colleagues will agree that our plan is realistic and feasible. Even the "bare-bones" operation that will result from our proposed spending cuts, however, will call for a \$3837.14 increase in our 1993–94 budget.

We have received no funding increase in three years. Our present need is absolute. Without additional funds, the *Torch* simply cannot continue to function as a professional newspaper. I therefore submit the following budget proposal for your consideration.

Respectfully,

William Trippe
William Trippe
Business Manager, SMU *Torch*

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INFORMATIVE ABSTRACT

The student newspaper at Southeastern Massachusetts University is crippled by inadequate funding, having received no budget increase in three years. Increased costs and inadequate funding are the major problems facing the *Torch*. Increases in costs of printing, layout, and photographic supplies have called for a decrease in production. Moreover, our low salaries are inadequate to attract and retain qualified personnel. A nominal increase would make salaries more competitive.

Our staff plans to cut costs by reducing page count, saving on photographic paper, reducing circulation, and hiring a new printer. The only proposed cost increase (for staff salaries) is essential.

A detailed breakdown of projected costs establishes the need for a \$3837.14 budget increase to keep the paper a weekly with adequate page count and distribution to serve our campus.

Compared with other college newspapers, the *Torch* makes much better use of its money. A detailed comparison illustrates the cost effectiveness of our proposal.

INTRODUCTION

Our campus newspaper faces the contradictory challenge of surviving ever-increasing production costs while maintaining its quality. The following proposal offers a realistic plan for meeting the crisis. The plan's ultimate success, however, depends on the Fee Allocation Committee's willingness to approve a long-overdue increase in our 1993-94 budget.

In its ten years, the *Torch* has grown in size, scope, and quality. Roughly 6000 copies (24 pages/issue) are printed weekly each 14-week semester.

With much of its staff about to graduate, the *Torch* faces next year with rising costs in every phase of production, and the need to replace outdated and worn equipment.

Our newspaper also suffers from a lack of student involvement. Few students can be expected to work without some kind of salary. Most staff members do receive minimal weekly salaries: from \$10 for the distributor to \$45 for the Editor-in-Chief, but salaries averaging less than \$2 per hour cannot possibly compete with the minimum wage. Since most SMU students must work part-time, the *Torch* will have to make salaries more competitive.

The newspaper's operating expenses can be divided into four categories: composing costs, salaries, printing costs, and miscellaneous (office supplies, mail, etc.). The first three categories account for nearly 90 percent of the budget. In the past year, costs in all categories have increased from as little as 3 percent for darkroom chemicals to as much as 60 percent for photographic paper and film. Printing costs (roughly one-third of our total budget) rose by 9 percent in the past year, and another price hike of 10 percent has just taken effect.

Despite the steady increase in production costs, the *Torch* has received no increase in its yearly allocation (\$21,500) in 3 years.

The plan following includes:

1. methods for reducing production costs while maintaining the quality of our staff
2. projected costs for equipment, material, salaries, and services in 1993-94
3. a demonstration of feasibility, showing our cost effectiveness
4. a summary of the attitudes shared by our staff

PROPOSED PLAN

The following plan is designed to trim operating costs without compromising quality.

Methods

We can overcome our budget and staffing crisis by taking these steps:

Reducing Page Count. By condensing free notices for campus organizations, abolishing "personals," and limiting press releases to one page, we can reduce page count per issue from 24 to 20, saving 17 percent in production costs.

Saving on Photographic Paper. A newspaper with fewer pages will call for fewer photographs. Also, we can save money by purchasing a year's supply of photographic paper within the next month, before the upcoming 15 percent increase.

Reducing Circulation. Reducing circulation from 6000 to 5000 copies will barely cover the number of full-time students, but will save 17 percent in printing costs.

Hiring a New Press. We can save money by hiring Sadus Press for printing. Other presses (including our present printer) bid at least 25 percent higher than Sadus's price. Also, no other company offers the delivery service we will get from Sadus.

Increasing Staff Salaries. Although we seek talented students who expect little money and much experience, salaries for all positions *must* increase by an average of \$5 weekly. Otherwise, any of our staff could make as much money elsewhere by working only one-third the time. In fact, many students could make more than the minimum wage by working for local newspapers. To illustrate: *The Standard Times* pays \$20 to \$30 for a news article and \$10 for a photo, while the *Torch* pays nothing for articles and \$2 for a photo.

A striking example of low salaries is the \$3.35 we pay typesetters. Outside, trained typesetters like ours make from \$8 to \$12 an hour. Our present typesetting cost of \$3038 easily could be as much as \$7000 or even higher, if we had typesetting done by an outside firm, as many colleges do.

Without this nominal salary increase, we cannot possibly attract qualified personnel.

Budget Request for 1993-94

Our proposed budget is itemized below, but the main point is clear: if the *Torch* is to remain viable, increased funding is essential for meeting projected costs.

Projected Costs

Equipment Leasing

	Yearly Total
(From Chase Manhattan Leasing Corporation, for Compugraphic equipment.)	
Execewriter	\$106.25/month
7200 L and hardware	127.38/month
Execewriter II	138.63/month
	<hr/>
	372.26/month
	=
	\$3,350.34

Composing Chemicals

Activator	\$105.00
Stabilizer	180.00
Processor Cleaner	55.00
	<hr/>
	\$340.00
	=
	\$340.00

Photo Paper for Execuwriters

3" x 150'	\$711.00
7" x 150'	556.37
Headline paper	732.63
8" x 150'	227.00
	<hr/>
	\$2,227.00
	=
	\$2,227.00

Layout Supplies

Font strips	\$160.00
Layout boards	160.00
Exacto knives and blades	80.00
Non-repro pens	30.00
Rulers	12.00
Scotch tape	50.00
Folders	30.00
Reduction wheels	20.00
Wax	45.00

4

Yearly Total

Projected Costs		
Construction paper	10.00	
Border tape	50.00	
	<hr/>	
	\$647.00	=
		\$647.00

Photography Supplies		
Paper	\$730.00	
Film	250.00	
Darkroom supplies	100.00	
	<hr/>	
	\$1,080.00	=
		\$1,080.00

Typing Staff		
35 hrs. at \$3.35/hr.	\$117.25/wk	=
		\$3,283.00

Salaries		
Editor-in-Chief	\$1,400.00/year	
News Editor	840.00	
Asst. News Editor	420.00	
Features Editor	840.00	
Head Writer (Features)	420.00	
Sports Editor	840.00	
Head Writer (Sports)	420.00	
Advertising Manager	1,050.00	
Advertising Designer	700.00	
Free Ad Designer	280.00	
Layout Editor	840.00	
Art Director	560.00	
Photo Editor	840.00	
Business Manager	840.00	
	<hr/>	
	\$10,290.00	=
		\$10,290.00

Fixed Printing Costs		
5000 copies/week × 28	\$12,399.80	=
		\$12,399.80

Projected Costs

Miscellaneous Costs

	Yearly Total
Graphics by SMU art students: 3/wk. at \$5 each	\$420.00
Mail costs	550.00
Telephone costs	500.00
Print shop costs	200.00
Copier fees	50.00
	<hr/>
	\$1,720.00
	=
	\$1,720.00

TOTAL YEARLY COSTS

Expected Ad Revenue

(1000/mo. x 10)

Total Costs minus Ad Revenue

TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST

\$35,337.14

\$10,000.00

\$25,337.14

\$25,337.14

Feasibility

Beyond exhibiting our need, we feel that the feasibility of this proposal can be measured through an objective assessment of our cost effectiveness: Compared with other school newspapers, how well does the *Torch* use its funds?

In a survey of the four area colleges, we found that the *Torch*—by a sometimes huge margin—makes the best use of its money. Table 1 in Appendix A [page 378] shows that, of the five newspapers, the *Torch* costs the students least, runs the most pages weekly, and spends the least money per page, *despite a circulation two to three times the size of the other papers.*

The most striking comparison is between the *Torch* and the newspaper at Fallow State College (Appendix A). Each student at FSC pays \$12.33 yearly for a paper averaging 12 pages per issue. Here at SMU, each student pays \$4.06 yearly for a paper averaging 20 pages an issue. Thus, for 33 percent of FSC's cost, SMU students are receiving 66 percent more newspaper.

The *Torch* has the lowest yearly costs of all five papers, despite the largest circulation. With the budget increase requested above, the cost would rise only by \$0.44, for a yearly cost of \$4.50 to each student. Although Alden College's paper costs each student \$4.29, it is

published only every third week, averages 12 pages per issue, and costs nearly \$50.00 yearly per page to print—as opposed to our yearly printing cost of \$38.25 per page.

As the figures in Appendix A demonstrate, our cost management is responsible and effective.

Personnel

Students on the *Torch* staff are unanimous in their determination to maintain the highest professionalism. Many are planning careers in journalism, writing, editing, advertising, photography, or public relations. In any *Torch* issue, the balanced, enlightened coverage is evidence of our judicious selection and treatment of articles and our shared concern for quality.

CONCLUSION

As a forum for ideas and opinions, the *Torch* continues to reflect a seriousness of purpose and a commitment to free expression. Its place in the campus community is more vital than ever in these troubled times.

There are increases and decreases in student allocations every year. Last year, for example, eight allocations were increased by an average of \$2,166. The *Torch* has received no increase since 1989–90. Presumably, various increases materialize as priorities change and as special circumstances arise. The *Torch* staff urges the Allocation Committee to respond to the paper's legitimate and proven needs by increasing our 1993–94 allocation to \$25,337.14.

**PROPOSAL FOR STANDBY POWER IMPROVEMENTS
AT WATER TREATMENT PLANT**

Safety Problem with Standby Power

The WTP uses four high-service pumps, which provide treated water to our customers. Three of the pumps have a rated capacity of 2 million gallons per day (MGD). The fourth pump has a rated capacity of 3 MGD. The average and peak daily demands at the WTP are 5 MGD and 7 MGD, respectively. Therefore, we typically run a combination of the pumps to meet our demand.

When an electrical failure occurs, we develop an unsafe situation for our electricians. The plant was originally designed and constructed to provide standby power only to the largest pump. The standby power came from the diesel-powered generator located alongside, and directly tied to, the 3-MGD pump. Therefore, when a power failure occurs, the power supply to the 3-MGD pumps can be switched from the standard supply to the generator. Under normal conditions, the plant is required to operate a 2-MGD pump along with the 3-MGD pump to meet customer demand. During power failures, we temporarily connect a portable standby power generator to one of the 2-MGD pumps. This temporary generator installation creates an unsafe condition.

The portable standby generator is stored on a trailer at Pump Station No. 11. During power failures, two electricians transport the portable generator to the WTP. The portable generator is parked outside, next to the doors of the pump room. The electricians run power cables from the generator to the Motor Control Center (MCC) of the pump, which is located in the pump room. Since power failures usually result from a severe storm, the electricians often make the generator connections while standing in the rain. The doors to the pump room remain open to provide an opening for the power cables to run from the generator, along the pump room floor, to the MCC. This setup exposes plant personnel to a live power cable and wet floor conditions and is in violation of Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations. These conditions could create an enormous liability to the City if they result in an accident to an electrician or plant operator.

Construction

Awning	\$ 2,500
Electrical Adapter	500
Electrical Outlet	500
Wire and Conduit	7,000
MCC Switches	<u>3,800</u>
Total Construction Cost	\$14,300
Total Project Cost	<u>\$26,300</u>
With 5% Contingency	<u>\$27,615</u>

The engineering fee includes design, preparation of plans, specifications and bid documents, review of bid, and services during construction. Construction costs include all labor and materials required to construct the improvements. A contingency fee of 5 percent of the total engineering and construction costs is included to cover costs not foreseen at this time.

The expected 2000 annual operation costs with these improvements is \$400. Without the improvements, cost is \$2,500. This higher cost comes from the additional employees required to provide the service necessary to achieve the standby power.

The project probably can be funded out of the water fund. We had \$20,000 left from last year's budget. A line item of \$7,000 could be allotted from this year's budget. The combination of funds will cover the total cost.

Coordination

The improvements will require the coordination and cooperation of City forces to construct and operate the system. As Manager of the Water Department, I will take full responsibility for the following:

1. Instruct the employees regarding the new operation procedures once the improvements are installed.
2. Provide monthly progress reports to the Mayor, and the Directors of Service, Law, and Finance.

3. Ensure that proper Ohio EPA and building permits are obtained.
4. Ensure that all City regulations involving capital improvements are followed.
5. Obtain proper approvals from the City Planning Commission and City Council.

Benefits

The main benefit of the proposed improvement is safety. As City leaders, we are responsible for the safety of our employees. The existing condition is unsafe and violates OSHA regulations. Also, the current permanent standby power system does not meet today's design standards. After improvements we will be in full compliance with all safety regulations. The expected initial cost is reasonable given the seriousness of the situation, and the proposed improvements will lower personnel costs in the future.

Conclusion

Currently, the City water treatment plant operates its standby power system in an unsafe manner, thereby risking the health and safety of plant electricians and operators. With the installations proposed, these unsafe conditions can be eliminated. In addition, these improvements will bring our operation up to current design standards.