

TIPS ON PREPARING PROPOSALS FOR INTERNATIONAL DONORS



1 read

Read the call for tender and the guidelines carefully and take plenty of time to study and understand them. An email address or telephone number is often provided so that applicants can clarify any points needing further explanation: follow the recommendations and use these resources to ensure that you are clear about exactly what is required.

2 identify & understand

Make sure that you have identified and understood the objectives of the call for tender and the larger objectives of the donor. Can you convince the donor that your project will contribute to these objectives? And is this opportunity really relevant to your organisation?

3 remember the golden rule

The person holding the purse strings sets the rules! Follow the directions for preparing and submitting your application exactly as specified by the donor. Bear in mind that if the maximum number of pages is two, your proposal will be rejected if you go over the limit by even a single word.

Some donors explain how each answer will be weighted when they make their decision. If they do this, make sure that you formulate each point in accordance with the weighting it will be given.

4 do the research

A. On your project

Who will the beneficiaries be? How many men and women will you reach? What evidence is there to show that there is a need for your project? Who else is doing similar work, and how will you complement what they do?

B. On the donor

What are their objectives, what have they funded in the past, what themes or issues are they interested in? Check their website as this will often provide information about ongoing projects.

5 be clear & concise

Always assume that the person reading your proposal knows nothing about the issue. Use clear, simple language and brief explanations to state your case, and always explain what an acronym means the first time it is used.

6 executive summary

The executive summary is extremely important – in fact, it is sometimes the only part of the proposal that will be read. Start with the most important information: your objective and intended impact, and ensure that the summary is clear, concise and contains all the requisite information.

7 logical framework

If the donor asks for a logical framework, make sure that it is coherent and convincing. As with the executive summary, the logical framework is often the first thing an evaluator will read, so use it as an opportunity to explain your project as clearly as possible.

8 your organisation

When presenting your organisation, specify how this project is relevant to your organisation and demonstrate that you have the necessary skills and experience to implement it.

9 budget

Check the guidelines carefully to see what can be included in the budget, and follow the donor's template for budget presentation. Try to include your administrative costs (administrator's salary, bank charges, etc.) as some donors will be prepared to finance them; if not, you will need to incorporate them into other budget lines. Try to present your costs as accurately and realistically as possible, as some donors will not accept any changes to the budget after a proposal has been submitted.

10 deadline

Finally, make sure you meet the deadline: even the very best proposal will be rejected if it arrives one minute after the deadline has passed!