

## Extreme Proposal Makeover

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*Grant Proposal Makeover:  
Transform Your Request From No to Yes*



- Published by Jossey-Bass.
- Available for purchase tonight (\$25 cash or checks).

## Workshop Objectives

- To demystify proposal writing
- To demonstrate that proposal writing is **both** a technical and creative process
- To deliver the practical tools you'll need to write and edit proposals
- What are **your** expectations?

## The Big Picture

How much \$\$\$ contributed annually from sources other than government agencies?

- \$260.28 BILLION!!!
- \$43.7 Billion in grants

## Competitive Environment

- How many nonprofits in U.S.?
- In the Bay Area?
- How many foundations in the U.S.?
- Ratio of proposals submitted to proposals funded?

## Helpful URLs

- The Foundation Center [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)
- Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance [www.cfda.gov](http://www.cfda.gov)
- Grants.gov [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov)

## What Do You Need \$\$\$ For?

- General Operating
- Programs/Project
- Capital/Equipment
- Endowment
- Seed Funding
- Technical Assistance/Capacity Building

## Funder "Pet Peeves"

- "Thou shalt *not* . . ."
- Present projects that don't match guidelines
    - 63%
  - Submit incomplete applications
    - 60%
  - Include bad budgets with proposals
    - 54%
  - Submit poorly written proposals
    - 49%

## Funder Preferences

- "Thou shalt . . ."
- Use statistics to demonstrate need
    - 84%
  - Use expert opinions to validate need
    - 65%
  - Use a formal outcome evaluation system
    - 65%

## Problem #1 Projects that don't match guidelines

- Inadequate research
- Inattentive to funder priorities or restrictions
- Desire for quantity over quality
- "They *should* fund us."

## Funder Comments

- *"The more mirroring of language there is, the less actual fit there is."*

Aaron Jacobs, Social Venture Partners

- *"Write as if you have read our guidelines, but without parroting back what we have said."*

Sandra Sinclair, J.W. McConnell Family Fdn

## What's an LOI (letter of intent)?

- Precedes a full proposal
- Used by funders to screen applicants
- 1 to 3 pages in length
- Demonstrates "fit"

## What is wrong with this LOI?

- Parrots back language, often verbatim
- No program/project description
- Doesn't provide a specific grant amount

## Grantwriting Tip!

- Don't just *say* that your program fits, *show* that it fits!

## What's Been Improved?

- Stronger opening
- More vivid images – *fresh bobcat tracks*
- Program details *demonstrate* fit
- Specific grant amount - *\$15,000*

## In-Class Exercise: Demonstrate Fit

*This Corporate Funder (Greenbucks, Inc):*

- Supports NPOs located in Marin County and where employees volunteer
- Lists funding priorities as education, health, and housing
- Funds programs and capital projects
- Awards grants in the \$5K to \$20K range
- Wants public recognition for grants

## In-Class Exercise (cont'd)

*Your non-profit agency (West Marin Community Clinic):*

- Is a community healthcare clinic serving a low-income population and those without health insurance
- Wants to offer free nutrition and preventative health care workshops

## In-Class Exercise (cont'd)

- Program start-up costs are estimated to be \$30,000
- The clinic is located in Pt. Reyes Station
- One of the clinic's board members is a fundraising consultant and another is a vice president of human resources at Greenbucks

## In-Class Exercise (cont'd)

- Using the facts provided and your own creativity, write at least three sentences that could be used in an LOI from West Marin Healthcare Clinic to Greenbucks, Inc.

## Proposal Components

- Summary
- Intro – history and mission
- Problem/Need
- Goals & Objectives - outcomes
- Project Description – methods
- Evaluation
- Future Funding

## Summary

- Comes first, written last
- Identifies agency and shows “fit”
- Describes the problem, the agency's response and expected results
- Specifies the amount requested
- States total budget & other funders

## Introduction: Agency History and Mission

- Highlights milestone events and major accomplishments
- Includes agency's mission
- Lists key individuals (founders, board, staff)

## Problem or Needs Statement

- Core of a proposal
- Can't assume funder knows the need
- Who do you serve and where? (constituents and location)
- Why does this need occur?
- Use relevant statistics/data to support
- Include anecdotes and quotes

## Goals and Objectives

- What is a goal? An objective?
- Typically, 1 to 3 overall goals
- Each goal may have 1 or more related objectives
- Objectives measure degrees of change such as: *increase, decrease, reduce, improve*

## Methods & Program Description

- Describes agency strategies and activities, plus rationale for choosing them
- May present this info in bulleted form

## Evaluation

- Describes agency plan for assessing whether objectives were met and methods followed
- Quantitative & qualitative measures
- Internal vs. external
- Budget assessment costs

## Future Funding

- What happens at the end of the grant period?
- What strategies does the agency have for securing future funding?
- Be as specific as possible

## Conclusion/Request

- One paragraph
- “Closes” your story
- Asks the funder for the funding!

## Problem #2: Poor Objectives & Evaluations

- Performance anxiety
- Funders' ambivalence
- No money for evaluation
- Evaluation is an after-thought
- Confusion over terminology

## Funder Comments

*Applicants should “demonstrate some system they have in place in their organization by which they will measure improvement and learning over the course of the grant.”*

Barbara Kemmis, The Crossroads Fund

## Funder Comments

*“Any approach could work, as long as it is clear what the organization/program set out to learn, what they learned, and how that information was plowed back into the work to enhance or end it. I want to get the sense that the organization is committed to learning as it goes.”*

Alice Cottingham, Girl’s Best Friend Foundation

## What’s Wrong with the Proposal?

- Objective describes methods, not targets
- Goals are vague, general
- Evaluation doesn’t measure anything

## Grantwriting Tip!

- Good objectives indicate desired level of *change*
- Good evaluation *measures* change

## Beyond “Bean-Counting”: Funder Comments

- *“We want more than the numbers who walk in the door.”*

Ann McQueen, the Boston Foundation

- *“An excellent proposal demonstrates the long-term impact (both individually and in the community) that the program has achieved.”*

Carole M. Watson, United Way of the Bay Area

## What’s Been Improved?

- Goal specifies target population *and* points to change in their condition.
- Objectives describe
  - What will change
  - By how much

## What’s Been Improved?

- Intermediate “markers” point to long-term change
  - Increased *knowledge* about diabetes
  - Changes in *attitude* – lifestyle changes planned
  - Changes in *behavior* – lifestyle changes maintained

## What's Been Improved?

- Evaluation addresses
  - Process objectives
  - Outcome objectives
  - Quality of services
  - Cost-effectiveness

## Budget

- Translating your narrative story into the language of numbers
- Must be consistent with the proposal

## Problem #3: Bad Budgets

- Poor program planning
- Poor communication between the person preparing the budget and the person writing the proposal
- No time for a final check with a calculator

## Funder Comments

*“Some think a budget does not include income. We expect to have a clear picture where all funds are received and disbursed.”*

Judith Murphy of the Y&H Soda Foundation

## Funder Comments

*“I want to see “moderately detailed line items. For example, line items for advertising, rent and meeting expenses are helpful. A single line item for ‘staff’ is not.”*

Anne Vally, the James Irvine Foundation

## “Ugly Duckling” Example

		How much is secured to date?
<b>Revenue from Grants:</b>		
Foundations	\$175,000	
Government	\$ 22,000	
Corporations	\$155,000	
Individuals	\$ 50,000	
Event (net)	\$ 15,000	
In-Kind	\$ 18,000	
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>\$435,000</b>

What's this?

Differs from amount in proposal narrative!

## "Ugly Duckling", cont'd.

Salaries & Benefits	\$ 98,700	
Contract Personnel	\$ 70,000	
Shipping & Postage	\$ 20,000	
Insurance	\$ 60,000	Needs explanation.
Materials & Supplies	\$125,000	Needs explanation.
Computer Equipment	\$ 23,000	
Contingency	\$ 38,000	Provide detail.
TOTAL EXPENSE	\$435,000	Does not compute!

## Budget Tips!

- Double-check to be sure the budget agrees with the proposal narrative!
- No large (more than 10% of total) unexplained budget items
- Include budget notes/narrative
- Give status of other funding
- Re-check the math!!

## Problem #4: Annoying Writing Styles

- Academic/abstract/vague/pontificating writing
- Florid writing
- Poor grammar and bad spelling

## Funder Comments

*"Jargon is annoying; big words when little will do is annoying."*

Aaron Jacobs, Social Venture Partners

*"The most common bad writing style is vague, overblown, indirect language."*

Lori McGlinchy, Open Society Institute

## "Ugly Duckling" Example

We are deeply committed to utilizing local intellectual and creative capital to achieve systemic change and plan to address fundamentals that will provide students with currency in the world of responsible adults.

## "Ugly Duckling" Example

This will metamorphose to accountability for enforced outcomes for each student and for each cohort. By drawing on local resources, the program will reinforce cultural and social assets in the students' community and re-integrate them to the values of their heritage.

## What's wrong with the example?

- Vague
- "Creative capital" and "metamorphose" ??
- Sounds lofty, but "where's the beef?"

## Makeover: The "Beautiful Swan"

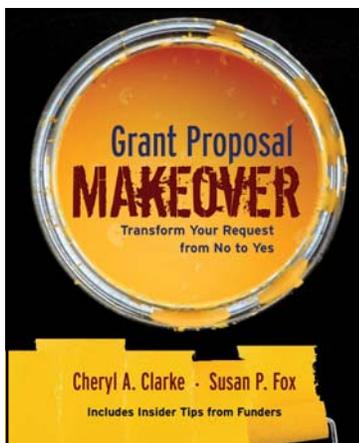
The *goal* of the New Horizons Initiative is to expand the students' horizons for future success by increasing their critical thinking and leadership skills and strengthening their connections within their own community and culture.

## What's been improved?

- More focused and specific
- Eliminates vague and pontificating language

## Conclusion: Time to Tell Your Story

- What's the one 'take-away' you'll put to immediate use?



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Cheryl A. Clarke · Susan P. Fox  
Includes Insider Tips from Funders

## **Anderson Family Foundation Guidelines for Applicants**

### **Who We Are**

The Anderson Family Foundation is a small but growing family foundation that strives to make a difference in the local community, which has been home to four generations of Andersons. Our values are expressed in our grantmaking, which emphasizes enlightenment of the mind, empowerment of the individual, nurturing of creativity and expression, and respect for and appreciation of nature and wildlife. To this end, we are dedicated to the well-being of children and youth, with special interest in programs that cultivate a better understanding of the natural world and foster creativity. The Foundation takes an avid interest in safeguarding our environment for future generations. Environmental education is critical if society is to preserve and protect natural resources. We believe that each individual can make a difference, and although society's problems can appear overwhelming, we see great hope in the enthusiasm, creativity, and intelligence of young people. The Foundation seeks opportunities where small and medium-sized grants can have a deep and lasting impact.

### **What We Fund**

- Nonprofit agencies and their programs that: (1) benefit children and youth, particularly young people from low-income households and those at risk within the Greater Urban City four-county area (Forest, Hill, Marsh, and River Counties) and (2) provide environmental education to children and youth:
- General operating, program, and project support:
- Grants in the range of \$10,000 to \$50,000:
- Agencies that do not discriminate against any person or group on the basis of age, race, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, national origin, political affiliation, or sexual orientation:
- 501(c)(3) organizations or those with a fiscal sponsor.

### **What We Do Not Fund**

- Capital campaigns, endowments, scholarships, individuals, films, videos, conferences, or fundraising events.
- Multi-year funding requests.

### **What Is Our Process**

The Foundation accepts two-page letters of inquiry throughout the year. Those selected will be invited to submit a formal application.

Send letters to:            Judi Smyth  
                                     Grants Manager  
                                     Anderson Family Foundation  
                                     100 Main Street  
                                     Suburbia, CA 90000-0001

## ***“Before” Letter of Inquiry to the Anderson Family Foundation***

January 30, 2006

Ms. Judy Smith  
Grants Manager  
Anderson Family Foundation  
100 Main Street  
Suburbia, CA 90000-0001

Dear Ms. Smith:

I am writing this letter of inquiry to the Anderson Family Foundation to tell you about Bridges to Nature, a unique and innovative 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that serves the Greater Urban City four-county area. Bridges to Nature is a wildlife sanctuary with year-round programming that educates children and youth about our natural world and fosters their creativity. We believe that Bridges to Nature is a good fit with the Anderson Family Foundation because our programs enlighten the mind, empower the individual, nurture creativity and expression, and teach respect for nature and wildlife. If invited to submit a full proposal, we would request grant funding of between \$10,000 and \$50,000. These funds will have a deep and lasting impact on the at-risk and disenfranchised youth we serve.

At Bridges to Nature, we seek to safeguard nature and wildlife from suburban development, and inspire future generations to preserve and protect our natural resources. Founded in 1985, Bridges to Nature is celebrating our 20th-anniversary of providing young people with a better understanding of the natural world. We believe that each individual child can make a difference. While problems such as suburban encroachment and rampant development, and the accompanying loss of wildlife habitat and wildlife itself, can appear overwhelming, we see great hope in the enthusiasm, creativity and intelligence of young people.

Bridges to Nature needs grant support to underwrite the costs of our educational programs for low-income and at-risk youth. Since our founding, we have opened our sanctuary gates to hundreds of school groups. Schoolchildren visit our beautiful 350-acre site located in forested hills that are populated by dozens of varieties of birds, deer, raccoons, skunks, bobcats, and the occasional mountain lion. Though Bridges to Nature is only a 30-minute drive from Urban City, the majority of low-income and at-risk youth have never experienced it. We introduce these young people to a whole new world that is beyond their daily experience. Our short-term goal is to provide children with an understanding of, and appreciation for, nature that they will cherish all their lives. Our long-term goal is to develop citizens who will help safeguard our environment for future generations.

Severe cuts have had a negative affect on school district budgets, causing many schools to eliminate field trips because bus transportation and related expenses cost too much. Bridges to Nature seeks grant funding so school children in poor and under-funded school districts continue to have opportunities to visit nature. We have to raise at least \$10,000 in support to sustain this program in the coming year, as current grant funding is about to run out.

We hope that the Anderson Family Foundation will want to learn more about Bridges to Nature. Please advise us as to whether we should submit a formal grant proposal. Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Chiaki Yamamoto-Barron  
Executive Director

***“After” Letter of Inquiry to the Anderson Family Foundation***

January 30, 2006

Ms. Judi Smyth  
Grants Manager  
Anderson Family Foundation  
100 Main Street  
Suburbia, CA 90000-0001

Dear Ms. Smyth:

Many low-income and at-risk children living in Urban City have never seen a deer in the wild or fresh bobcat tracks in the soft dirt. At Bridges to Nature, a wildlife sanctuary and education center located a mere 30 minutes from Urban City, we give these young people an opportunity to experience nature—up close and personal!

I am writing to the Anderson Family Foundation to tell you about Bridges to Nature and our outstanding education programs. After reviewing your current guidelines, I believe that our agency is a good fit with the Foundation’s funding priorities. If invited to submit a full proposal, we will ask the Foundation for a grant of \$15,000 to help support our “Busloads to Bridges” program. This program enables under-funded schools and school districts in the Greater Urban City four-county area, though primarily in Urban City, to send school groups to Bridges to Nature.

Bridges to Nature is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization founded in 1985, when the Fisher family donated 350 acres to the new agency with the stipulation that the land be held in perpetuity as a wildlife sanctuary and environmental educational center. Our educational center and small wildlife museum are housed in what was formerly the Fisher estate home. Agency offices are found in several small outbuildings near the main center.

For 20 years, Bridges to Nature has offered a variety of environmental education programs geared to elementary and high school students. We estimate that Bridges to Nature has served more than 60,000 students in the past 20 years, or an average of about 3,000 students per year. Approximately 40% of the visiting students come from low-income households. The majority of our programs are daylong visits to our sanctuary, which combine hands-on nature

experiences with classroom learning. We also provide teachers with pre- and post-visit curriculum materials, which enhance the student's visit. In addition to our one-day program, Natures to Bridges also offers several multi-day and weeklong options.

Several schools have brought their students each year since our educational programs were first offered. However, in recent years, we started hearing from principals and teachers that schools could no longer afford to participate due to severe budget cuts that eliminated costs such as bus rentals and even modest participation fees. Hardest hit were schools in low-income communities, especially those in Urban City, where children were the least likely to have opportunities for excursions outside the city or even outside their immediate neighborhoods. Without Bridges to Nature, these students would miss the chance to experience and learn about the natural world that exists just outside the city limits.

To meet this need, Busloads to Bridges was created three years ago with a three-year \$100,000 seed grant from the Urban City Community Foundation. This funding enabled Bridges to Nature to underwrite the cost of bus transportation and group participation fees for those schools otherwise unable to bring student groups out to the sanctuary. The program has been a huge success, as all underwritten spots filled within a few weeks after notices were mailed to local schools. However, Bridges to Nature is now in the third year of the three-year grant from the Community Foundation, and we must secure new grant funding if we are to continue this worthwhile program, which is why I am writing to the Anderson Family Foundation. A grant of \$15,000 would enable us to underwrite school visits by ten classrooms. The average daily bus rental rate is \$500, and our full-day student group rate is \$500. Student groups average between 20 and 30 children.

For a child who has never before seen a wild male turkey in full plumage, a visit to Bridges to Nature can be an eye-opening experience. I hope you will want to learn more about Bridges to Nature and will invite us to submit a full proposal. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to call me. Thank you very much for considering our letter of inquiry.

Sincerely,

Chiaki Yamamoto-Barron  
Executive Director

## **DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM**

### **Goals and Objectives**

Our goals for this grant are to reduce the incidence of preventable diabetes and to reduce medical complications among those already diagnosed as diabetic. Our specific objective for the one-year grant period is to start a Diabetes Education Program for our clinic clients and the general public in West Polaris County.

### **Evaluation**

At the end of the one-year grant period, we expect that the Diabetes Education Program will be up and running to serve the West County community. This will include classes, individual consultations and a resource Web site. A report on activities of the DEP and a full accounting of the expenditure of grant dollars will be provided to all funders.

## **DIABETES EDUCATION PROGRAM (Revised)**

### **Goals and Objectives**

The ultimate goal of the Diabetes Education Program (DEP) is to lower the incidence of preventable diabetes in the West Polaris County community and to reduce serious medical complications among those already diagnosed as diabetic.

Our expected outcomes for the first year of the program are as follows:

- At least 500 West County residents will receive basic information on diabetes through attendance at DEP informational sessions.
- At least 150 West County residents will plan lifestyle changes as a result of attendance at one of DEP's Diet and Exercise in Diabetes Management classes.
- 30 diabetics or at least 50% of those receiving one-on-one consultations with DEP counselors will report improvements in disease management.
- 50 persons per day will be accessing information on "Living with Diabetes" via our Web site.

### **Evaluation**

The Diabetes Education Program (DEP) will be evaluated at three levels by answering the following questions:

- ***Did we provide the planned services? Did we reach our target population?***  
Attendance rosters and agency records will provide data on the number of informational sessions, classes, and individual consultations held and the attendance at each. Agency records will provide further detail (ethnicity, income level, sex, city of residence, age, diabetes predisposition factors) on the profile of those receiving individual consultations. We will also track the number of hits to the "Living with Diabetes" resources on our Web site.

- ***Did services produce the desired outcome?***  
Those attending informational sessions, classes, and individual consultations will be asked to complete a simple questionnaire to assess whether they learned new information and what lifestyle changes they plan as a result. Project counselors will hold follow-up sessions with those who participate in individual consultations to monitor whether planned lifestyle changes have been made and kept and if clients have experienced decreased risk indicators or improvements in managing their diabetes. Follow-up phone calls will be made to those not attending follow-up sessions to elicit their feedback.
- ***How can we improve our outreach and/or our services?***  
Project staff will review the list of informational sessions and classes and attendance at each of their regular quarterly meetings to determine which venues and times attract the largest number of our target population. Promotional materials and activities will also be reviewed for effectiveness. Planned adjustments in scheduling and promotion activities to maximize attendance will be noted in the minutes for each meeting.

Feedback from clients on the effectiveness of all the project activities will also be sought via the questionnaires and follow-up phone calls and through our Web site. The questionnaire will ask specifically how the program might be improved and what additional services are desired.

At the end of the grant period, the project director will gather and analyze all of the evaluation data and prepare a narrative report on the DEP and its effectiveness in meeting project goals and objectives. This report along with a full accounting of the expenditure of grant dollars will be distributed to all project staff and funders.