

# “Dos” and “Don’ts” for Writing Successful Grant Proposals

## 1. Preparing to Apply

Do:

- Register for Grants.gov as soon as you are confident you will apply
- Read the FFO carefully for: budget limits, duration, due date, focus
- Review the associated website for detailed instructions and helpful info
- Pay attention to review criteria to make sure your project is appropriate
- Communicate with the program officer regarding your project

Don’t:

- Wait until the due date to submit your proposal
- Wait to identify key people/ institutions and their roles
- Submit a proposal written for another agency or announcement without appropriate revision

## 2. Components of the Proposal – The Project

Do:

- Design measurable objectives that relate to the funding announcement
- Organize your proposal logically as it relates to the review criteria
- Relate your project to the mission of the agency
- Demonstrate the need for your project and why YOUR approach is appropriate
- Align timelines and milestones with the project description text
- Include letters of support that demonstrate partner involvement
- Use proper grammar
- Use an external reader
- Include references

Don’t:

- Add details that are not integral to the project
- Fail to identify your project’s audience(s) up front
- Forget to leverage your past successes
- Ignore significant requirements of the FFO
- Ignore underserved populations
- Forget to reference letters of support in proposal text
- Include web page URLs that don’t work
- Use too many acronyms
- Waste space on poor images or try to save space by bulleting everything

## 3. Components of the Proposal – The Evaluation

Do:

- Identify your evaluator and include them in the proposal writing team
- Use specific and appropriate approaches to project evaluation
- Provide questions evaluation will address
- Answer the “How will you know” question
- Include evaluation data from previous efforts (qualitative and quantitative)

Don’t:

- Provide a two-sentence general description of the evaluation
- Think reviewers will be impressed by broad outcomes that evaluation is not assessing
- Forget to include the evaluation’s cost in the project budget
- Underestimate the cost of conducting a project evaluation

#### 4. Components of the Proposal – The Budget

Do:

- Make sure it is within the required range
- Make sure your math is correct
- Look at where your money is allocated and what this says about the project
- Provide clearly delineated description of costs

Don't:

- Apply for the full amount allowed unless your project needs it (i.e., add extraneous equipment, supplies, or activities to “pad” your budget)
- Ignore costs for interns and teachers
- Ignore administrative costs
- Cite an indirect cost rate without providing appropriate documentation

#### 5. Specific Project Element Issues

Do:

- If you are developing curricula, make sure your efforts are not redundant with other products
- If you are expanding an existing program, state the new target areas and criteria for expansion
- If developing a website, state who will maintain it and how it will be evaluated and marketed

Don't:

- Underestimate the time and resources involved in creating a new curriculum
- Use inappropriate methods to engage target audiences
- Assume building a website means people will use it

#### 6. Additional Guidance

Do:

- Address comments from the pre-proposal (if pre-proposals were required)
- Be specific in describing your project activities
- Volunteer to serve as a reviewer
- If proposal reviews well, consider revising and resubmitting

Don't:

- Assume the reviewers already know your organization's or the PI's qualifications
- Believe all excellent projects will receive funding
- Be overconfident
- Be afraid to talk to the program officer for input

#### Additional Resources

NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants Program: [http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding\\_opps.html](http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/funding_opps.html)

NOAA's B-Wet Grants Program: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/BWET/>

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