

Tips for Writing Grant Applications for Watershed Restoration and Protection

If you are an official in local government or a leader of a community organization in New York State, these tips are designed to help you prepare applications for grants to protect and restore New York's watersheds. Projects could include watershed planning, implementation, technical assistance, education or building partnerships

A great deal of useful information for watershed project assistance is now available on the Internet. Web site links are listed, as appropriate. You may also find relevant tips for grant preparation at sites unrelated to environmental protection.

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This information has been compiled from a variety of publications and web site sources. Because so much information is available, changing and in many formats, this document cannot be considered as the definitive authority on the subject of finding resources. For the most up-to-date information, check the web site or reference listed.

See also the list of Sources of Funding and Other Assistance on this web site. It is a list of federal, state, regional and private funding sources. Also included are suggestions for sources of technical assistance and volunteer help.

How to develop a good watershed project

What's a watershed?

A watershed is all the land that contributes water, from rain or melting snow, flowing over and through the ground to a specific lake, river, ground water supply or coastal waterbody. Wherever you are, you are in some watershed. Unless the land drains directly into the ocean, your local watershed is part of a larger river or lake system that is part of a larger drainage basin.

What's a watershed project?

Planning or implementation actions to restore natural stream flow, prevent pollution or protect human communities or aquatic habitat are some types of projects to restore or protect waterways, wetlands, stream corridors and lakeshores. Such projects may be eligible for funding or technical assistance. Some examples are:

- protecting an aquifer recharge zone
- cleaning up an urban waterway
- creating storm water collection basins
- removing structures from a floodplain
- upgrading a wastewater treatment plant
- restoring habitat for game fish.

While they all might be worthy of attention, some will emerge as of higher priority than the others. It is important to determine how investment in priority projects will give the greatest benefit in improving water quality or enhancing aquatic habitat within the watershed area.

How will your project benefit the environment? What is the value of the resource the project will protect or restore? What uses do your community, upstream or downstream users make of the waterbody in question? Is it a reservoir that is your only source of drinking water? Is it a heavily used swimming or recreation area where users come into contact with the water? A recipient of wastewater discharges? Be prepared to explain the problem threatening or causing impairment or affecting aquatic habitat, the source of that problem and to what extent your project will restore or protect the water quality and/or habitat. You will need documentation.

In determining the degree of impairment, look up your water body in the NYS DEC Priority Waterbody List (PWL). If your project involves a waterbody segment that is in the PWL, be sure to identify the segment and include a copy of the PWL page that describes the segment's impairments with your application. (The PWL is available at all County Soil and Water Conservation District and DEC Regional offices.) In addition or as an alternative, cite other documentation that describes the water quality impairment/habitat disturbance, if available. Include the name of the document, the date it was published, and the author. Documentation of the problem or disturbance can help potential funders understand how your project will improve the waterbody or enhance aquatic habitat.

Is your project within lands or waters covered by a management plan? If the project is an activity identified in an existing watershed management plan, a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program, NYSDEC or Department of State-sponsored Aquatic Habitat and Unit Management Plan, County

Water Quality Strategy, or municipal/intermunicipal plan, identify the plan(s) by name and explain how your project is contributing to the overall goals of the plan. If the project is not within the boundaries of a management plan area, it may contribute to other regional economic or social priorities. Take the time to make the connections.

Developing a Funding Strategy

Starting at Square One: Where's the Money?

For local governments, projects are usually funded by re-allocating existing revenues in the municipality's general fund or by long-term borrowing through municipal bonds. (See the EPA Environmental Finance Center web site at <http://www.epa.gov/efinpage/> for descriptions of the types of bonds available.) What if your capital budget does not include the resources to undertake environmental protection or improvements? How else can you pay for projects? Funding sources and fund-raising options should be discussed early in the planning process. It is likely that you will need a mix of sources of funding, technical assistance and labor to accomplish your goals. First, consider some not-so-common, **alternative revenue sources**.

New utilities: Local governments are using the utility concept to establish a dedicated funding source or "stand alone" service unit within the city government that generates revenues through fees for service. For example, a storm water utility district could provide a dedicated funding source for urban runoff control projects. The fee could be based on criteria such as the amount of impervious area a new development creates. A storm water utility is to storm water what a sewer district is to sewage and a water district is to drinking water. It is an institutional entity responsible for storm water system planning and for the operation, construction and maintenance of storm water management devices. The utility approach is also being used with homeowner associations or even individual property owners to implement some runoff management practices, such as maintaining septic systems, grading small construction sites or installing landscape designs.

State revolving fund loans, proved successful in the early years of point source pollution control, are now being adapted to fund a wide variety of nonpoint source control projects and best management practices (BMPs).

Special fees and taxes are another source of dedicated project funds for controlling water pollution. This approach involves, for example, the use of special taxes and fees on the sale of fertilizers and pesticides, waste disposal, and underground storage tanks. The EPA web site offers a Guidebook of Financial Tools detailing some innovative approaches being used to fund environmental programs: <http://www.epa.gov/efinpage/guidbkpdf.htm>

Planning Your Fund-raising

If the project you want to accomplish cannot be funded through your municipal budget or some of the alternatives described above, then it's time to look elsewhere.

Identify **grantors**. There are two main types of funding:

Core funding and funding for large projects: generally available through grants from foundations and government programs or agencies.

Funding for smaller activities: generally available from local agencies, businesses and service clubs.

Consider all levels of government, foundations, corporations and regional or local institutions. (See *List of Funding Sources*).

Contact those funding sources that seem most appropriate for your task. Find out their eligibility requirements and their application deadlines. Make a **schedule** that includes the deadlines for those funding organizations you are thinking of approaching. Identify all the tasks involved. Estimate the time requirements for each task, and make contingency plans in case things don't work out as planned.

You will not be able to pin down all the expenses associated with the project until the program details and timing have been worked out. Thus, the main financial data gathering takes place after you write the narrative part of the master proposal.

However, at this stage you do need to sketch out the broad outlines of the **budget** to be sure that the costs are in reasonable proportion to the outcomes you anticipate and that the project is within the ability of your group. Consider when the money is needed - at the beginning of the project? Equally throughout the course of the project? Near the end? Quantify the work to be done and the resources needed. For example, "build 30 feet of log crib retaining wall and stabilize 200 feet of streambank with live vegetative materials." The resources needed are lumber and rock, plant materials, approvals, and the cost of preparation, purchase, delivery, installation and maintenance.

Identify possible **spin-off projects** or benefits that could be funded separately from the main project, and perhaps on a different schedule. Examples include establishing a park or canoe access at the improved stream site, setting up an educational action program for a youth or senior citizens' group, publishing a brochure, or conducting a watershed "open house" bus tour for local officials. A wise manager always has a wish list of extra project elements to implement if and when funding becomes available.

Work with your partners

Start with your own group, municipality or partnership. What resources are already available? Can members supply meeting space, clerical support, or mailing costs? Could the municipality provide trash pickup or engineering services? Would volunteer labor help? Can members themselves provide grants or other financing? Some of these financial or in-kind contributions could be eligible as matches for other grant funds. Are partners eligible for grants that could apply to the whole project, or a portion of it?

If **partners** are not already involved, consider bringing together organizations whose members

are stakeholders in the results of the project, for instance, anglers, neighbors, open space advocates, scout leaders, biologists, farmers, or water suppliers. They may provide creative ideas and resourceful solutions you have not thought of. They can also provide enthusiasm and attention for your project.

Here are a few tips on how to choose the right partner:

- Make sure the prospective partners bring strengths to the union and have compatible goals and visions.
- Ensure that all parties are fully committed to making the partnership work.
- Carefully outline the challenges and benefits of the proposed partnership.
- Make certain that any agreement clearly spells out the mutual objectives, financial or service expectations and shared risks.
- Ensure that any obligations undertaken through the partnership fit in with your group's goals and objectives.

When you have your project fully planned and a budget in place, then you can start to seek funding. It is important to have a specific funding request and show that you have planned thoroughly and are a credible organization. Submit your proposal with a covering letter.

What are the tangible and intangible returns?

What are you asking support for?

What are the benefits to the community?

What are the benefits to your organization?

What are the benefits to the donor?

Why is your organization raising money?

Does the project complement your goals and objectives? Does it complement the goals and objectives of the potential donor?

Corporate sponsorship or underwriting: A local firm, or a local office of a regional or national company may be willing to help fund all or part of your project. Banks, dairies, insurance companies, manufacturers, retail stores - all may have money budgeted for community service. For larger firms, call the community relations contact person; find out their funding policy. What types of projects do they fund? What materials could they provide? Some might supply tee shirts, soda or snacks for workers cleaning up a beach. Others may underwrite the purchase of sampling equipment or lend a backhoe and operator for a special task. Approach local businesses and corporations with headquarters or branches in your community. Some may support specific areas of interest. Some companies may provide funding while others will only donate services or in-kind contributions.

Your proposal should include information about the project, along with a business plan, a short narrative that will speak to business owners in their own language. The business plan outlines the amount of money you need to raise, as well as your fund-raising strategy. It should show how your organization's activities relate to the company's public image and/or will benefit its customers.

State and federal agencies: These traditional sources of funding for community development and conservation projects may fill your need, but they can also be unreliable. Funding tends to follow political priorities, which can shift over time. In general, the uncertainty of politics and priorities make annual appropriations less than dependable. The size of the “pie” (the total available state and federal money) can vary greatly from year to year. Furthermore, competition for pieces of the same pie has increased. However, if your organization is eligible and your project fits the requirements of a funding program, government grants may be the source of significant support. Agencies can also be the source of in-kind services, such as technical assistance.

Member Items: Your State Assembly or Congressional Representative or State or U.S. Senator may be able to earmark funds for special needs. It doesn't hurt to try, but because many constituents in many sectors have the same idea, such funding is highly competitive.

Charitable Foundations: Usually, private foundations fund only established institutions with federal nonprofit status. The major foundations or charitable trusts maintain web pages that list their interests, which may be by geographical area or topic, or both. Most have strictly observed funding cycles, with a board reviewing requests only once or twice a year. Smaller, local foundations could also help; increasingly, civic leaders and citizens are establishing community funds to support activities of local civic benefit. Charitable foundations often favor projects that have significant social or educational value to the community.

Individual Donations: Many people like to feel a sense of belonging and commitment to their community. These citizens may be interested in becoming members of your organization, or helping with your project. Often a key source of initial funding can be brought in by offering memberships in your organization or by soliciting donations for a special project.

Special Events: Many organizations choose to raise funds by hosting special events. These events offer other benefits as well, such as publicizing your group and its activities to the community. But you should consider the following before choosing this approach: Human resources required (volunteer and staff); financial resources needed (up-front money and your financial goals); organizational image; audience, and timing. Hosting a special event is a major undertaking that can be fun, but usually requires separate event planning, a special committee, and a separate budget.

Preparing a Grant Application

General Guidelines

Edit: Watch typos; seek and rewrite passive voice verbs to make active statements. Enlist the services of an editor who knows English grammar. Have a person unfamiliar with the project read it and comment. Never send in a hand-written proposal. Use word processing or desktop publishing techniques to make things cleaner but not too flashy. Be sure to stay within the page or length limits specified; wordiness will not win you extra credit. Use a normal type and font, 10-12 characters per inch; grant readers probably wear bifocals. Use a spell-checker.

Name the project: A named entity takes action and speaks in the active voice. Keep saying "the (named) Project will do this," "...will accomplish that," "...coordinates this," etc.

Avoid restating the goals and priorities listed in the solicitation notice. Assume that grant reviewers already know their subject and don't need instruction from ground zero. Rather than trying to address all the possible topics listed in the solicitation notice, focus on one aspect. Evaluation panels often prefer projects with a clearly defined purpose that can be accomplished within the grant's timeframe, rather than projects that attempt to address multiple priorities or that have very broad goals that will require extended time to be achieved.

Partners: It is always valuable to emphasize partnerships. If your proposal fails to include adequate reference to partnerships or other appropriate involvement with organizations that have major responsibilities related to the proposal's goals, it may be considered a serious failure, perhaps leading to rejection of the proposal. For example:

- Your proposal relates to soil erosion, but fails to include any linkage to the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service or your county Soil and Water Conservation District. Or,
- Your proposal relates to toxics in public water supplies but fails to include any linkages to local health departments or water suppliers.

Try to understand the responsibilities and authorities of all relevant local, state and federal agencies and institutions related to your project's goals and include them where appropriate, possibly in a steering or advisory committee capacity if they are not directly involved in tasks.

Emphasize transferability of project results. Unless yours is a unique situation, projects may be more highly rated if they can serve as a model and can be replicated in other places. Don't simply state "the results of this project will be transferable to other communities." Show that you have given this issue careful thought and explain in more detail how it may be transferable and which items or activities of your project may be unique or especially valuable.

Be sure you are eligible: If the grant is targeted to Soil and Water Conservation Districts, those are the only entities that can get the money. If it is for 501(c)(3) nonprofit groups, then school districts cannot apply. If the grant program specifies "municipalities," it will define what that term means - it could include school or lake improvement districts, counties, towns, etc. The grant may stipulate only what type of group can apply, but may not limit the types of partners involved. Creative partnering could help expand your options for eligibility.

Be sure your project is eligible: Avoid proposing ineligible projects. For example, the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act will not fund technical training, research and development, information or education projects. On the other hand, outreach grants for county Water Quality Coordinating Committees are designed to fund these types of projects, but not construction work.

Prepare a cooperative grant proposal: If it's a partnership proposal, get the team members together for a meeting to decide who will do what. Set a deadline for participation and require a

commitment from each organization's administration. Have participants write and type parts of the grant, i. e. biographies, description of facilities, budget justifications. Ask team members to proof read the project description and budget justification.

Most funders will provide **guidelines** and materials for preparing your proposal, including forms, an outline and detailed instructions. If the funder doesn't offer information, ask about the preferred format. Prepare the grant narrative according to the funder's instructions. Use headings and subheadings to help guide the readers in an orderly, logical manner through your proposal.

When writing a proposal for a state or federal grant, use the selection criteria as **headings** to help reviewers pick them out easily. Adhere to the funder agency's instructions completely in the preparation and submission of your proposal. Instructions will include typing guidelines, limits on the number of pages, forms, signatures and assurances required, appendices and number of copies to be submitted.

Do not send identical proposals to all possible funding organizations. It is better to have a well-thought-out, coordinated approach and to target specific sources.

Pace yourself! A competitive grant proposal can take several months to plan, develop and submit to a potential funding source. A good proposal cannot be put together quickly. Careful planning, documentation, review, external support and, possibly, cultivation of a funder all take time. The process actually should start long before a grant competition opens officially. You may not have much time between the announcement and the filing deadline; by the time an announcement appears, savvy grant seekers will have nearly completed their preparation. Give yourself plenty of time to think, write and complete the proposal.

Note: You don't have to start at the beginning of the application. Write the summary or cover letter last, after all the thinking and linking has been done. It should flow easily if the grant application is well structured.

And now to specifics...

A Step-by Step Tour through a Grant Application

Needs Statement

Describe the "problem" in a sentence or two and how the grant money will help you solve it. The needs statement does not have to be long and involved. If appropriate, research the project and describe exactly why your community or research field needs the project. Projects that are likely to be implemented regardless of the availability of the desired grant are less likely to be approved. If the grant is essential to the implementation, make a strong case for the money. Identify related, existing materials. Use the facts and evidence to support the project or to justify a different approach. The needs statement lets the reader learn more about the issues in the context of your community, supports the need for the project and establishes how your group understands the problems and therefore can reasonably address them. The information used to support the case can come from authorities in the field, as well as from your organization's own experience.

You want the needs section to be succinct, yet persuasive. Like a good debater, you must assemble your arguments. Then present them in a logical sequence that will readily convince the reader of their importance. As you marshal your arguments, consider the following six points.

1. Decide which facts or statistics best support the project. Be sure the data you present are accurate and current, and not too generic or broad. Avoid overkill; balance the information presented with the scale of the program.
2. Give the reader hope. Don't paint so grim a picture that the solution appears hopeless. The funder will wonder whether investing in a solution will be worthwhile. Avoid overstatement and overly emotional appeals. Tie your needs statement, if possible, to priorities already identified in a management plan for your area. For example, *"Although cleanups address the symptom and not the source of beach degradation, they are a recognized way of solving part of the problem. Organized voluntary beach cleanups address two priorities identified by the Long Island Sound Study: floatable debris and public education/involvement."*
3. Decide if you want to put your project forward as a model. Don't try to make this argument if it doesn't really fit. Funders may well expect your agency to follow through with a replication plan if you present your project as a model. If you do, you should document how the problem you are addressing occurs in other communities and explain how your solution could be a solution for others as well.
4. Determine whether it is reasonable to portray the need as acute. You are asking the funder to pay more attention to your proposal because either the problem you address is worse than others or the solution you propose makes more sense than others. Here is an example of a balanced but weighty statement: "Soil erosion is a national problem. Each day, an average of xx tons of soil wash down rivers, causing flooding, changing stream beds, and damaging aquatic habitat. In Our River Valley, the problem is worse. Erosion damage is estimated to cost \$xxx annually. Hence, our soil erosion prevention program is needed more in Our Valley than in any other part of the state." (Be sure you can substantiate this.)
5. Decide whether you can demonstrate that your program addresses the need differently or better than other projects that preceded it. But try not to be critical of the competition or your predecessors. If possible, you should make it clear that you are aware of, and on good terms with, others doing work in your field. Today's funders are very interested in collaboration. So at the least, describe how your work complements, but does not duplicate, the work of others.
6. Avoid circular reasoning in which you present the absence of your solution as the actual problem and then offer your project as the way to solve the problem. For example: "The problem is that we have no way to view wetlands in our community. Building a viewing platform will solve the problem." A more persuasive case would describe how residents and visitors do not appreciate local wetlands and how another community has used a viewing platform to build awareness through education and recreation programs. The

statement might refer to a survey that underscores the target audience's planned use of the facility and conclude with the connection between the proposed usage and potential benefits to enhance life in the community.

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Goals and objectives

The core of any proposal is the section in which you explain your goal, objectives and activities, all of which should flow naturally from the need statement in which you described the problem you are attempting to solve. They should be clearly distinguishable.

Goals express the overall intent and outcome of the proposed project and should relate directly to the funder's purposes and priorities. (Examples adapted from the Hudson Basin River Watch)

Goal Example: *To educate volunteers of all ages in the science of river monitoring and conservation.*

A note of caution: Reviewers tend to be skeptical of intentions "to educate the public" or, in the words of an applicant notably not funded, "to educate the masses"! Identify your target audience more precisely, and be sure you understand the difference between informing, educating and training.

Objectives specify a result or outcome that moves the project toward the goal. They can include quantitative measures of accomplishments and qualitative descriptions of progress. Each objective should explain what will be done, by whom, for whom, when, how and to what level of performance. Objectives must be specific and measurable because you will need to use them to develop evaluation methods to judge your success.

Objective Example: *Volunteers will sample Our Creek, using the QA/QC procedures for parameters identified in the program, during two consecutive weeks in the spring and fall and will post the results on our web site.*

The goal is broad, while the objective is much more specific. It is achievable in the short term (6-12 months) and measurable (sampling conducted at specified times). Competition for dollars is so great that well-articulated objectives are increasingly critical to a proposal's success.

Using different examples, here are four types of objectives (you might use one or two, not all):

Behavioral: A human action is anticipated (e.g., skill learned, behavior changed, action taken).

Example: *The participants will learn to use binoculars and monocular scopes to identify shorebirds.*

Performance: A specific time frame within which a behavior will occur, at an expected proficiency level, is expected.

Example: *At least 85 percent of wastewater treatment plant operators in the training program will advance to the second level of certification by June, 2003.*

Process: The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.

Example: *We will document the effectiveness of the three different types of on-site wastewater treatment systems installed and use the demonstration project to plan training for sanitation inspectors and system installers.*

Product: A tangible item results.

Example: *Teachers and staff will produce a manual to be used in training volunteers to conduct sampling that meets the criteria of the QA/QC plan.*

In any given proposal, you will find yourself setting forth one or more of these types of objectives, depending on the nature of your project. Make sure that the objectives do not become lost in verbiage and that they stand out on the page. You might, for example, use numbers, bullets, or indentations to denote the objectives in the text. Above all, be realistic in setting objectives. Two to four should suffice. Don't promise what you can't deliver. Remember, the funder will want to be told in the final report that the project actually accomplished these objectives. Your track record can affect future funding.

Activities

Activities implement objectives. They explain what the project actually will do, including timeframes, personnel responsible for carrying out each activity and the people who will participate. Target your audience specifically and explain why they need the project. For example, describe clearly the individuals or groups that make up your audience; for example, indicate that 30 municipal employees or 40 retired citizens will attend a two-day workshop to improve their skills in a particular topic area.

From your goals, objectives and activities flow your project's procedures, timeline, staffing plan, evaluation, dissemination methods and budget. You should devote the most time to developing this core.

When you have a first draft of goals, objectives and activities, you might want to ask colleagues, experts, partners or administrators to review it and offer comments. You also may be able to ask the funders to review a first draft, either in writing or verbally, so you will know if you are heading in the right direction.

Note: <i>This level of review may be feasible with private foundations; it is not typical of government grants.</i>

What information do you need to provide?

Read the grant application carefully. Make yourself a checklist of the elements required so that you can track the status of each one. Understand the scoring criteria the reviewers will use and

make sure that your proposal addresses them.

Provide brief but sufficient information on your municipality or organization, such as location, development history, demographics or membership, mission, etc. Reviewers want to know if your group can do what you say it will do. You could note briefly any related projects that you have undertaken to show how this project will continue work already begun or will allow you to start something new. Unless requested, do not send annual reports or reports of past projects; however, you could note that these are available.

Budget Section

Make sure you understand when the funding is available, either by date or by a point in the project cycle. If funding is reimbursement for costs after projects are completed, you will need other means of covering your “up front” expenses.

The budget section typically includes both a cost summary sheet and a budget narrative.

Minimum-Maximum Price Range: Before preparing a proposal and budget, determine what would be an appropriate amount to request. Guidelines usually will tell you the maximum amount allowed. Request the maximum if you can justify it, but never request more money than the program allows. Many agencies publish a list of grant awards made the previous year. The approximate range of previous awards can be found in the *Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance*, individual agency annual reports or perhaps on the funder’s web site.

Multiple parts: Where the scope of work of an application involves multiple project locations or many work components, include a separate budget breakdown for each component or location where work will be performed. Photocopy the “Project Budget” and fill in the information for that place or portion. Then summarize all the components on a total project budget page.

Direct Costs: Find out what items can be charged to the grant. Will it pay for outside consultants, fringe benefits or travel? What are the rules about purchasing equipment? Will it pay salaries for project administrators or the hands-on implementers?

Indirect Costs: (Overhead) Indirect costs pay for office and meeting space, heat, lights, library, administrative costs, etc. No institution arbitrarily sets its own indirect cost rate. Public educational institutions and agencies are assigned a federal agency with whom they negotiate an indirect cost rate each year, based on an audit of the previous year's transactions.

Cost Sharing and Matching: Even if not required, grant proposals are stronger when they include matching funds. Here is where you can show the strength of your partnerships. Funders often require applicants to match their awards and may specify the type or percentage of match required. There are two types of matching funds: cash and in-kind contributions. Cash funds are the actual dollar contribution available from the applicant or another funding sources for the proposed grant project. In-kind contributions are services or other resources available to implement the project. You will need to include both direct costs and overhead in your calculations.

Federal agencies almost always require that some part of the cost of a project be borne by the applicant. When cost sharing is required and no rate is specified, about five to ten percent is acceptable. This is usually provided by pledging some portion of personnel salaries with related fringe benefits, and in some cases, indirect costs. Show that your organization has obtained the required level of non-federal matching funds. Carefully document both matching funds that are provided in cash and those represented by in-kind contributions and other noncash support. Applications that indicate a substantial match are more competitive than those with the minimum percentage of matching funds. Other sources of cost sharing can be used, but they must be carefully documented for auditing purposes and eligibility.

Matching costs are slightly different from cost sharing. Matching costs are commitments by the organization to spend its funds in a certain proportion to funds provided by the granting agency. For example, wastewater system improvements funded under the New York Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act receive 85 percent of construction costs; 15 percent of costs must be matched locally. Typically, this sort of commitment is required for equipment or facility grants and is a guarantee of actual dollars rather than an in-kind contribution.

Staffing and Administration: If a hidden purpose of your application is to pay for staff to conduct the program, this fact will be evident in the budget where the whole salary shows up. This may, or may not, be appropriate. Administrative and supervisory costs would show up here as percentages of staff time (and salary or wages). Fringe benefits, an indirect cost, should be listed in the correct category.

In the narrative, discuss the number of staff, their qualifications, and specific assignments. Details about individual staff members involved in the project can be included either as part of this section or in the appendix, depending on the length and importance of this information. Projects that hinge upon a single individual are risky in reviewers' eyes. If the work is important to accomplish, backup systems should be in place.

"Staffing" may refer to volunteers or to consultants, as well as to your paid staff. Most proposal writers do not develop staffing sections for projects that are primarily volunteer-run. Describing tasks that volunteers will undertake, however, can be most helpful to the proposal reader. Such information underscores the value added by the volunteers as well as the cost-effectiveness of the project.

For a project with paid staff, be certain to describe which staff will work full time and which will work part time on the project. Identify staff already employed by your organization and those to be recruited specifically for the project. How will you free up the time of an already fully deployed individual?

Salary and project costs are affected by the qualifications of the staff. Delineate the practical experience you require for key staff, as well as level of expertise and educational background. If an individual has already been selected to direct the program, summarize his or her credentials and include a brief biographical sketch in the appendix. Resist the urge to include more than a one-page summary. A strong project director can help influence a grant decision. If you plan to hire new staff, include the general qualifications in this section, e.g., civil engineer, or adult

educator.

Describe for the reader your plans for administering the project. This is especially important in a large operation, if more than one agency is collaborating on the project, or if you are using a fiscal agent. It needs to be crystal clear who is responsible for financial management, project outcomes, and reporting.

Travel: Having determined what travel expenses the granting agency will allow, calculate the cost of each trip, e.g., train fare, taxis, etc. Mileage reimbursement may be available for private vehicles. Summarize transportation costs, for example, as “two 100-mile round trips per month for six months, at \$xx each for a total of \$xxx.” You may also need to budget for lodging and meals. If the application guidelines do not specify allowable amounts for these expenses, use the current federal rates: \$.345 per mile, as of April 1, 2001. See the domestic maximum per diem rates at <http://policyworks.gov/org/main/mt/homepage/mtt/perdiem/perd01d.html>.

Supplies and Materials: Read the grant guidelines carefully to find out what is allowed. Under this category, include enough supplies for all activities in the project. Expendable office supplies, for example, are stationery, duplicating supplies, typing/computing supplies, including software. Expendable laboratory supplies such as chemicals or filters would also be included in this category.

Equipment: Any item that will retain its usefulness beyond the grant period is considered capital equipment; its cost is not included in calculating indirect cost. Funding agencies have different views on the purchase and maintenance of equipment, so be sure you know the policy of the agency before including such costs in your budget. For example, if a monitoring group seeks funding for a new boat motor, funders may well consider this a capital expense, not equipment. Similarly, a construction project would probably not seek all new tools. Think about what you need that is new, and how much will be used up or how much will stay with the project sponsor after the grant work is done. If it stays, then it might help to seek only partial funding, with your organization or a partner covering at least some of the cost of new equipment.

Communication: This category encompasses the cost of all communication related to the project, such as telephone charges, web site design, fax, etc. The cost of written communications (paper, envelopes, postage) may be included here or under supplies.

Services: Under this category be sure to include all service expenses to be incurred during the project period. Examples include: media services, statistical consulting, conferences, workshops, animal care and use, electron microscopy. Indicate any tasks you expect to contract out and who will receive the contract (generically, if the contract will go out for bids).

Identify Total Cost of Project: Developing the budget is an excellent test of how clearly and completely the project has been described. The grant writer should now be able to work through the narrative of the proposal and identify the costs to be included in the budget.

You should be aware that, should the project be approved, you may be asked to give a rationale for various items in the budget. It is a good idea to prepare a budget justification worksheet

which outlines the basis on which each cost was developed. Identify the pages in the narratives that substantiate the particular expense and mention any special purpose for the funds not documented in the proposal.

The use of a budget justification worksheet also helps you identify the items that can be used to substantiate local cost-sharing funds. For example, many funding sources will count as "match" (at the regular salary rate normally paid consultants) the time contributed to a project by a volunteer advisory board, particularly if the board is composed of professionals.

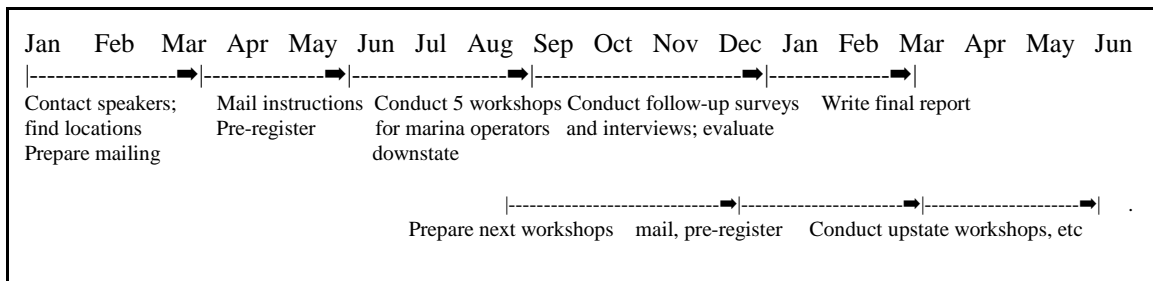
Preparing the Final Budget: If the grant funder provides a budget form, you must use it. If there is no budget form, organize your budget according to broad categories listed above. These categories will vary depending on your particular project, but these are the most commonly used.

Grants Administration and Contracting Rules

Make sure that you understand rules governing grants and funding so that your worthy and otherwise excellent proposal is not rejected on technical grounds. Both your own organization and the funder probably have such rules. Examples include conflicts of interest, possible involvement of your project staff in the preliminary development of the request for proposals, or funding of the same activity by a different grant.

Schedule or Timeline

Develop a realistic time line. Demonstrate that you can complete the project within the funding period, typically one or two years. List the sequence and time frames of major tasks you will undertake to meet the goals of the project. Divide major tasks into smaller tasks and identify them on a schedule that covers the entire grant period. A Gantt chart, a type of stacked bar chart derived from construction project scheduling, is a good way to present this information in a nutshell. It shows the relation between several overlapping components. For example, a project to present workshops to owners of marinas in upstate and downstate areas could be shown like this:



Evaluation An evaluation plan should be built into the project from the start. Including an evaluation plan in your proposal indicates that you take your objectives seriously and want to know how well you have achieved them. Evaluation is also a sound management tool. Like strategic planning, it helps an organization refine and improve its program. An evaluation can often be the best means for others to learn from your experience in conducting the project.

There are two types of formal evaluation. One measures the product; the other analyzes the process. Either or both might be appropriate to your project. The approach you choose will

depend on the nature of the project and its objectives. For either type, you will need to describe how evaluation information will be collected and how the data will be analyzed. You should present your plan for the way the evaluation and its results will be reported and the audience to whom it will be directed. For example, it might be used internally or be shared with the funder, or it might deserve a wider audience of colleagues or other interested parties. Both process and product evaluations are essential for projects designed to be replicated in other places.

How will you measure success? Will you survey participants or beneficiaries of the project? Will you test for learning? Will you measure changes in water quality, public safety or ecosystem health? Match your evaluation to your goals and objectives. Do you need milestones to appear on your timeline schedule? If you gain new insights, how will you share them with colleagues?

Describe how the project's successes will be sustained after the funding period ends. Will the process be integrated into existing procedures or ongoing maintenance?

Summary/Cover letter

It's a good idea to write the summary and/or cover letter last, when you know how the proposal shapes up. The purpose is to pique the interest of the reviewer, to make him or her read on, with interest. It is your most powerful marketing tool. You are providing the reader with a snapshot of what is to follow. Specifically, the summary encapsulates all of the key information and is a sales document designed to convince the reader that this project should be considered for support.

Finishing the Job

Internal Review In addition to submission guidelines of the funder, you should be sure to follow your own organization's internal rules and procedures. In a large, complex organization, the finance or budget office reviews your project budget, the grants office reviews the entire proposal, and the chief administrator signs it as the organization's official representative. A board of directors or city council may need to give permission to submit the proposal. A state clearinghouse also may be required to review and comment on your federal proposals. Check with the federal funder to see if this is necessary for the grant program to which you are applying.

At the very least, the project initiator should review the draft proposal with his or her immediate supervisor and any site administrators and other personnel affected by the project. You may include with your proposal letters of support and commitment from individuals you have included in the grant as participants or consultants, if they will not make the package too unwieldy. A better idea is to state that the proposed partners have made commitments to the project and that their letters of support are available upon request.

Quality control Before you submit it, read the entire grant two or three times for completeness, accuracy and typographical errors. Perform a final quality control check to ensure that application materials are complete and that the copies are legible. Be sure you have made the correct number of copies requested and that you have included an original with original signatures and an embossed seal, if such are required. Including unsolicited materials, such as extra letters of support or annual reports, will not make the reviewers look upon your proposal more favorably. In fact, such actions may signal that you cannot follow directions.

Mailing Read the mailing instructions carefully. Hand deliver the application only if the RFP says you may. Most grantors will not accept faxes or electronic submissions as yet. Check to be sure whether your grant must be postmarked or received by the deadline date, and mail it at a post office or send by another delivery carrier, with return receipt requested. Even if your package is misplaced, your certified receipt and number can be used as proof of mailing, which will satisfy the agency if done in accordance with its written guidelines. Seldom are grant deadlines extended. Proposals received after the deadline may be returned to you without review.

Waiting to hear

The length of time between your submittal and the announcement of funding may seem like eternity. Much activity is going on behind the scenes. Copies of proposals are provided to selected reviewers or review teams. Each reviewer scores the proposals on rating factors that are usually described in the grant announcement. Then the reviewers may convene in person or by conference call to resolve differences and come to a consensus on the applications chosen for funding. The recommended projects may need to pass through another layer of review before the finalists are announced. If government funding is involved, it is possible that an appropriation to fund the grant program could get held up by legislative processes. Here is a long, but possible, time line of a successful proposal for a two-year federal grant:

July 2001	Call for Projects (or RFP - Request for Proposal) announced
Oct. 2001	Proposal deadline
Jan. 2002	Staff review completed; recommendations go for further review.
April 2002	Grants approved for funding but money not appropriated
Sept. 2002	Appropriation approved; notification of grant funding
Jan. 2003	Funds available for use after contracts are approved Start date depends on project; construction season, summer program, etc.
Feb 2005	Project completed; final report due.

If you get the grant...

Funders will contact you to tell you your grant has been funded; don't harass them for this information. A written award notice will come in the mail. The award notice will give you the basic information on your grant, including: award amount; start and end dates of the project; program and fiscal officers, and grant conditions and reporting requirements.

Only when you receive written notification of your grant can you begin to spend the money. Do not rely on a verbal approval. Remember to send a letter of appreciation to the program officer for foundation or other private sector grants.

The funder may wish to prepare a press release to announce your grant, or, in the case of a state or federal grant, may wish to let your state legislator or congressional representative make the announcement. Check with the program officer first to see what local publicity efforts are appropriate for you to make. And don't forget to express thanks, both in writing and in ceremony. When the project is completed, include the grantor(s) and partners conspicuously in the opening or announcement of the improved area.

When you accept a grant, you take on responsibility and strict accountability for the use of the

funder's money, whether it is from public or private funds. A grantee must be fully capable of administering funds and taking full legal responsibility for them. That requires sound management and fiscal policies and procedures for coordinating grants administration with your organization's business or fiscal office. Keep track of expenditures so that you can submit an accurate report to the grantor. This will build a track record that can reflect favorably on your next request. You may be required to sign a contract to accomplish your work. Work with your organization's finance or budget office to deposit your grant funds, set up an internal budget and establish procedures for drawdown. Grant budgets are governed by an organization's policies and regulations regarding expenditures, purchasing and personnel. Your organization's rules always apply regardless of funding source.

Other requirements: Within your own municipality or organization, make it clear who will coordinate with other offices on the functions necessary for purchasing, subcontracting, compensation schedules, maintaining records, accounts and audits, reporting submission of program and final reports, and other conditions required by the funder. Know when your program and financial reports are due, how they are to be prepared, signed and submitted, and the types of program changes you can make without prior funder approval. Do all of this accurately and exactly according to instructions. Future grants may depend on proper administration of your current grant.

Good grants management is built into grants development. If your proposal includes a solid management plan, clear objectives, appropriate personnel, a strong evaluation plan, an adequate budget and sufficient resources, you should be able to achieve your project goal and successfully implement the program.

...and if your proposal is not funded...

If your proposal is not funded, the funder will usually notify you by mail. It may be possible to find out why your proposal did not succeed. Immediately write to the program officer and request the readers' comments on your proposal, giving your grant application number. State and federal agencies may* give you anonymous reviewers' comments and sometimes an additional written and/or verbal critique from the program officer. You will seldom get readers' comments from private funders, but may receive a verbal review of the strengths and weaknesses of your proposal instead. Review all criticisms of your proposal. It could have many strengths and need only minor revision. Do not take the rejection personally. Learn from the criticisms of the readers, revise your proposal and try again. This is especially true when you are dealing with funders or grant programs for the first time.

* In the case of the Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act and the EPF, the volume of applications precludes individual feedback.

Adapted with permission from material posted on the Web by Rosalind F. Dudden, MLS, DM/AHIP Health Sciences Librarian, Tucker Medical Library National Jewish Medical and Research Center 1400 Jackson St., Denver, Colorado 80206.

References: Other sources of help in preparing grant applications

Directory of Environmental Grantmaking Foundations, 6th edition (1998)

A very detailed source of information on nearly 800 US independent, community and company-sponsored foundations that annually fund more than \$425 million in environmental projects.

Available in **print copy** (1050 pages) for \$94, plus \$6.00 s&h, plus county sales tax in NYS or as a **CD-ROM** at \$104, plus \$6.00 s&h, plus county sales tax in NYS

Contact: Resources for Global Responsibility, PO Box 22770, Rochester NY 14692-2770 phone (800) 724-1857; Fax (716) 473-0968, or E-mail rgs@environmentalgrants.com;

Web site <http://www.environmentalgrants.com> on the Internet.

EPA Grant Writing Online Tutorial at <http://www.epa.gov/seahome/grants.html> May 1999

This interactive software tool walks users through the grant writing process and helps them learn to write more competitive grants with program-specific sections on Environmental Justice, Environmental Justice Through Pollution Prevention and Environmental Education. It provides examples of good, complete grant packages, references, a glossary of terms, resources and contacts, and a mock grant-writing activity in which users can compare their results to a successful grant application.

Fundsnet Web site: <http://www.fundsnet.com>

Grant Master <http://www.grantmaster.com>

This commercial service has a proposal template at \$50 (non-profit rate) and offers professional review and consultation services under a fee structure.

Grants Action News, a monthly newsletter from the office of the Speaker of the New York State Assembly, lists federal and state grants in all areas of interest to New York State organizations. Available at <http://assembly.state.ny.us/gan/> or sign up (free) for the mailing list: Laura Koennecke, 1 Commerce Plaza, Suite 1125, Albany NY 12260 or call the *Grants Action News* hotline at (800) 356-8486.

GrantScape: Grantseeking 101 A free web service document provided by Aspen Press, from which many of the tips in this document were adapted, with permission. See it all at <http://www.grantscape.com/> and note other publications listed for purchase. Call (800) 638-8437 or register on-line to order.

Grants Index Web site: <http://fdncenter.org>

The web site of the Foundation Center is an excellent place to start your search.

The Grantsmanship Center at (800) 421-9512 or <http://www.tgci.com> - look for their training courses sponsored by local agencies or institutions. These are usually listed in Grants Action News.

Olson, Stan, Kovacs, Ruth, and Haile, Suzanne. National Guide to Funding for Libraries and Information Services. New York, The Foundation Center, 1991. 120pp.

Sontheimer, Richard D. and Bergstresser, Paul R, "The ABCs of Research Grant Writing: The Advice of Two Grant Reviewers," Journal of Investigative Dermatology, 1991 Aug; 97(2):165-168.