

Summary Statements:

Writing Those Critical Opening Words of Your Grant Proposal

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The Proposal Summary, also called the “Summary Statement,” is often the first item read by members of a grant review committee. And unfortunately, if it does not deliver the clarity that a summary statement should have, it may also be the only part of the proposal to be read. Therefore, although short in length, the proposal summary is critical to your funding success and requires special attention.

Often people find the concise writing style of a proposal summary difficult. Even when the content of your funding project is clear, distilling your thinking into 100 words or less can be painful. To help you create an effective summary, try dividing the writing process into three distinct phases.

First, before writing any part of the grant proposal, create a simple outline of the proposal summary using the checklist shown on the right. This step will help you identify what parts of the proposal need further clarification, and will help you stay focused on the key points as you write.

Second, write the grant proposal first, saving the summary statement for last. Because the writing process often clarifies and changes your content, writing the summary at the end will save you rewriting time.

Third, allow time to let the first draft of your proposal summary sit over night. A good night’s sleep and the fresh morning light often bring clarity to the editorial process. Be sure to look at each word in the summary, and ask whether it helps to give the grant reviewer a clear picture of your proposal project.

One last thing, remember that the concise writing style of a summary statement does not need to be only hard cold facts but inspirational and reflective of your organization’s passion and conviction for the project.

Here is an example of a one-paragraph summary statement:

Summary Statement Checklist

If not limited by word count, spacing, or other guidelines from funders, the proposal summary should generally be one or two paragraphs (no more than half a page), and concisely written to include:

- Name of the organization
- Reputation or distinguishing features of the organization
- Name of the project or program to be funded
- Description of the problems or needs addressed
- Objectives of the project
- Methods or strategies to achieve the project objectives
- Total project cost
- Amount of the funding request
- And an earnest conviction for the project’s impact

“Anna’s Place respectfully submits this proposal to the _____ Foundation requesting a gift of \$_____ to support our \$125,000 “Shelter Renovation Project.” For 32 years, Anna’s Place has been the only social service agency in Hudson County NY to offer victims of domestic violence a temporary shelter – a safe and protected place where they can receive the support they need to create a new life, one free of domestic violence. Our modest but beloved shelter is a 15,000 square foot building that has not been renovated since it was purchased in 1984. As a result, the interior of the shelter is in serious need of reconstruction, primarily due to the wear and tear from an average of 860 women and children who utilized the facility every year since 1984. Open 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, this shelter sits at the center of all our services and plays an essential role in the fulfillment of our mission. The project includes renovation of the shelter’s kitchen, shower rooms (2), bathrooms (3), laundry room, office/reception area, and more. With generous support from the _____ Foundation and others, Anna’s Place will be able to launch a 2-3 month renovation project in spring 2012.

WRITING SAMPLE: SOPHIAJOHN Writes
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