

Executive Summary:

A 1-page abstract of the proposal is necessary (5+ pages for longer proposals). This condensed version of your proposal is sometimes the only content that foundation board members will read. Content should include:

- Brief overview of the organization.
- Specific purpose of the grant/overview of critical need statement.
- Why is NIU and/or your college/department is the best qualified (regionally, statewide, nationally or internationally) to take on the program/research initiative?
- State your anticipated end results/overview of goals and objectives.
- Provide the total program budget/requested amount.

Organizational Background:

- State the NIU & NIUF mission.
- Include a brief history of NIU
- NIU Overview – number of colleges, programs, annual graduates; student body profile – numbers and diversity
- Include 3-5 NIU accolades.
- State the mission (and possibly brief history) of your College/Department/Program.

Critical Need:

- What is the need to be addressed?
  - Substantiate the need with evidence.
  - Use facts/figures. Cite your information.
  - Think externally. The need is not your specific financial need. Rather, the need is the problem that necessitates your program/research (ex: prevalence of disease; widespread poverty; cultural gap in the arts community, etc).
- How does this connect to the funder's mission/funding priorities?
- Your need should focus on the community served – not the need of the organization/department.
- Your statement of need should be easily-digestible.

Project Overview + Goals and Objectives:

- Start with 1-2 sentence "hook" on what your project is.
- Goal = A focus of accomplishment supported by a series of objectives needed to realize it. A broadly-stated subsidiary result.
  - *EXAMPLE: The goal of the XYZ research initiative is to transform prevention, diagnosis and treatment of \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Objective = A significant step toward a goal; or a precise, measurable, time-phased result.
  - Narrower than goals
  - Must be quantifiable
  - Specifies the result of an activity
  - Clearly identify the target audience/community served
  - Must be realistic – able to be accomplished in specified timeframe

- Ask yourself five questions to develop objectives:
  - What is/are the key area(s) your organization is seeking to change?
  - What segment of the population will be involved in the change?
  - What is the direction of the change (an increase or improvement, or a decrease or reduction) your organization will be looking for?
  - What is the degree/amount of change your organization will be looking for?
  - What is the deadline for reaching that degree of change?
- *EXAMPLE: To meet this goal, our objectives include:*
  - *Objective 1: By August 2026, we will identify ## medicines containing \_\_\_\_\_ that can be used to target the \_\_\_\_\_ that causes the disease.*
  - *Objective 2: By December 2026, we will test ## medicines using \_\_\_\_\_.*
- Is your project unique? Be sure there's not already another university in the region/state working on this same or highly similar project.

**Methods (Program Activities):**

Systematically walk grant makers through the activities you/your initiative proposes to carry out in order to accomplish the stated objectives.

- Spell out the methods used and provide reasons for choosing those methods.
  - Proven methods: Provide research detailing previous success.
  - Untested methods: Use data that supports your assertion that these methods might prove successful.
- Are these methods already in place at your organization? Are they being "redeployed?" Or are they new?
- Answer the following questions to develop this section:
  - What are the elements that are inflexible (such as date of completion, dollars available, staffing needed)?
  - What activities need to be carried out in order to meet the objectives?
  - What are the starting and ending dates of these activities?
  - Who has responsibility for completing each activity?
  - How will participants be selected?
  - How was this methodology determined to be the best one to solve the problem presented? Does it build on models already in existence or is it a different approach? If it is different, why is it different? And why did your organization select it?
- Methods should be realistic and be able to be completed in the stated time frame with the available resources.

**Community Served:**

- Describe the characteristics of the community you're serving.
- How/why were these people selected?
- Possible demographics include:
  - Ethnicity/race
  - Geographic location
  - Socioeconomic status
  - Gender
  - Orientation
  - Religion
  - Age
  - Disabilities

Personnel Involved:

- Include bios of faculty, staff, researchers (and potentially students, alumni and/or volunteers).
- Bios should make the case for “why NIU and these people are the best for this project” (certifications, specializations, big awards, years of service, etc.).

Why NIU?:

Expand upon the personnel bios above as to why NIU and/or your college, department or program is the best qualified to drive this research/program.

- Are we the top supplier of career-ready graduates in a certain field that serve the Chicagoland region?
- Are we the top-ranked program in the region/state/nation?
- Are there any impressive rankings/accolades that speak to the quality of the program/department/college?
- Does NIU have essential facilities or other unique characteristics that other universities in the area do not have?
- Are there any corporate/community partnerships that aid the program/college?
- Do not assume that we are the largest/best – make sure you do your research when coming up with these facts; look at other school websites, etc.

Timeline:

Your timeline should fit the grant request timeframe and should outline your methods/program activities component. Alternatively, the methods/program activities component could be organized in a timeline fashion.

Evaluation:

This is necessary to determine the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of a program and will reveal what did and did not work.

- Address how the organization will use evaluation to plan for its future.
- Many foundations allow organizations to designate 5-10% of a program budget for evaluation.
- Evaluation seeks to accomplish six primary purposes:
  - Find out if the hypothesis was correct – Did what the organization originally proposed actually do what the organization expected it would?
  - Determine if the methods specified were indeed used and the objectives met.
  - Determine if an impact was made on the need identified.
  - Obtain feedback from clients/constituents served and other members of the community
  - Maintain some control over the project
  - Make midcourse corrections to increase the program’s chances of success
- To help develop the evaluation component, answer the following questions:
  - What is the purpose of your college’s/department’s/program’s evaluation?
  - How will the findings be used?
  - What will you know after the evaluation that you do not know now? What will you do after the evaluation that you cannot do now because of lack of information?
  - How will the lives of the people or community you serve be better?

- QUANTITATIVE METHODS: These are used to quantify data using averages, means, percentiles, etc. They help to determine a possible cause-and-effect relationship in the program or compare two different methods seeking to achieve the same outcome. They can also be used to establish numerical baselines for future evaluation.
- QUALITATIVE METHODS: These are based on direct contact with the people involved (interviews, observation, review of selected documents).

Sustainability:

This describes how the program will be funded beyond the scope of the funding request. Most funders want to know that the program/research will not end when the gift timeframe ends (and it will end – funders rarely want to fully sustain programs/projects).

- Will NIU and/or your college/department continue funding the project once established by the foundation's gift?
- Capital/Equipment Proposals: Costs for operating new equipment, maintaining new building, and/or increasing services – how will these things be funded?
- Capacity-building: How will the organization support the capacity it has grown?
- Continuation grants from foundations/corporations: Though not many foundations/corporations are interested in sustaining programs/research (versus new or expanding programs/research), do you have prospects that might fund its continuation (Annual campaigns, fees for service, sale of items/activities)?
- Also consider the sustainability of non-financial resources (sustaining current thought leaderships, recruiting new thought leadership, volunteer support, in-kind support; etc.).

**REFERENCES:** Carlson, Mimi, and Tori O'Neal-McElrath. *Winning Grants: Step by Step*. 3rd ed., Jossey-Ba