

NOAA's "Dos" and "Don'ts" for Writing Successful Grant Proposals

Preparing to Apply

Do:

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

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

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 reviewer evaluation criteria
- Relate your project to the mission of the agency
- Demonstrate the need for your project and why YOUR approach is appropriate (include a strong rationale for the project *approach*, as well as topic)
- Identify the target audience
- Consider sustainability of project after the duration of the grant
- Discuss how results of project will be shared, outreach or dissemination plan
- Align timelines and milestones with the project description text
- Use proper grammar
- Use an external reader to help you proofread
- Include references
- For NOAA funding opportunities: incorporate NOAA assets, as appropriate

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/under-represented 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
- Use inappropriate methods to engage target audiences

Components of the Proposal – Project Evaluation

Do:

- Identify your evaluator and include them in the proposal writing team
- Use specific and appropriate approaches to project evaluation
- Provide the questions that the evaluation will address
- Include evaluation data from previous efforts (qualitative and quantitative)
- Use a logic model, if requested
- **For B-WET:** Consider how to balance project evaluation and the B-WET National Evaluation

Don't:

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

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, use cost categories
- Use a budget template or model

Don't:

- Apply for the exact full amount allowed unless your project needs it (i.e., don't 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

Other Project Issues

Do:

- If you are developing instructional materials, 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
- Be sure to include adequate description of personnel qualifications (CVs or resumes) and organizational capacity to do the work being proposed
- Include letters of support/commitment that demonstrate partners' involvement

Don't:

- Underestimate the time and resources involved in creating a new curriculum
- Assume building a website means people will use it
- Include general letters of endorsement from prior participants, members of Congress or other civic leaders (i.e, from non-partners)
- Include letters of support/commitment that all have the same boilerplate text

Additional Guidance

Do:

- Address comments from the pre-proposal (if pre-proposals were required)
- Be specific in describing your project activities
- Remember the primary readers are external reviewers and not NOAA staff (so you may need to explain NOAA assets in more detail)
- 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/grants/elg.html>

NOAA's B-WET Grants Program: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/bwet.html>

NOAA Grant Applications Presentation: <http://www.oesd.noaa.gov/grants/elg.html#page=resources>

Contact Information:

For questions pertaining to NOAA's Environmental Literacy Grants, email: oad.grants@noaa.gov

Carrie McDougall, Senior Program Manager, NOAA Office of Education, carrie.mcdougall@noaa.gov

Sarah Schoedinger, Senior Program Manager, NOAA Office of Education,
sarah.schoedinger@noaa.gov

Bronwen Rice, B-WET National Coordinator, NOAA Office of Education, bronwen.rice@noaa.gov