

Eight Qualities of Exemplary Proposals

Association of Small Foundations

1. **Energy.** The proposal bristles with enthusiasm, urgency, passion. It suggests a group of people who can barely contain their eagerness to begin working. As a reader, you find yourself inspired and excited by their plans.
2. **Expertise.** The proposal's authors know what they are talking about. Their plans reflect a deep understanding of the problem they are addressing. They are aware of similar efforts that have been undertaken in the past. Their theoretical knowledge is tempered by time-tested experience in the field. They inform their practice with solid theory and continue their own professional development despite the demands of their daily work.
3. **Commitment.** The proposal reflects the organization's genuine priorities rather than being one of many programs it is currently juggling. The grantseekers demonstrate their willingness to invest their own unrestricted resources in the project. Rather than moving on to a new endeavor in the near future, the organization is committed to continuing the project.
4. **Clarity.** The proposal is clear about what the organization wants to do, why it is important and how it will be carried out and evaluated.
5. **Collaboration.** The grantseeker has formed alliances with other organizations to advance their mutual goals. The people served by the proposed project have participated in its planning. All involved parties appear more interested in getting results than carving out turf.
6. **Benefits** (*public benefit*). The organization is less concerned with underwriting its own needs. The project's goals are indisputably worth striving for, and the target group is appropriate.
7. **Comprehensiveness.** The problem's complexity is matched by the sophistication of its proposed solution. The grantseekers' thinking reflects a comprehensive strategy, rather than a piecemeal approach.
8. **Effectiveness.** A well-designed, ongoing evaluation reflects the group's commitment to getting results. The project has the potential for achieving a wider impact if it is replicated elsewhere in the future.