

What do Funders Look for in a Grant Proposal

Association of Small Foundations

Credibility

The proposal will indicate in numerous ways whether the organization appears to be a reliable potential grantee.

- Does the organization know what it wants to accomplish?
- What is the evidence that the organization is currently achieving its goals?
- What kind of reputation does the group enjoy within its community and beyond?

Capability

Funders not merely in the business of supporting good ideas; they are also investing in people who can turn these ideas into reality, as well as an organization that has the structure and systems in place to achieve its goals.

- What skills do the organization's staff and board bring to the project? Are they relevant to the project's aims?
- Has the organization succeeded in similar endeavors of equal size and scale to what they are now proposing?

In short, funders want to find out if the staff and board of the applicant organization can carry out the project or program effectively. (Some foundations appreciate attachments, such as press clippings and staff biographies as evidence of both credibility and capability.)

Feasibility

Funders determine whether the proposal is advancing a worthwhile project built upon a good idea that can be successfully implemented by the sponsoring organization. This question of feasibility naturally touches upon both credibility and capability; an incredible, incapable organization is not the logical source of exemplary work. But funders also consider the project on its own terms, apart from the sponsoring organization. Simply put: Can it be done?

Funders will consult the budget to make certain that the organization has allocated sufficient resources to execute the various tasks and strategies described in the proposal.

Importance

- Is the project significant?
- Is there evidence that the proposal will trigger action or work that the community wants?
- Will it make a difference in the community it purports to aid or resolve the issue it addresses?
- Given your other opportunities for funding, is it the right one to support at this time?