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## Tips for LOIs and Applications

July 2017

# Using This Resource

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- Based on grantee feedback and requests, Cullen Foundation developed this resource to assist interested nonprofits in writing LOI's and applications that meet Cullen Foundation criteria and standards.
- Please note that there are many more resources available online that we recommend for further research if your organization does not already have this expertise.

# What is a Grant Proposal & What is a “Good Proposal”?

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A grant proposal is a clear statement of need, the plan to serve that need, and a specific request for funds to support the successful implementation of that plan.

A good proposal will:

- ✓ Explain the need/problem
- ✓ Describe the strategy (*project*) to address the problem and specify expected (*tangible & realistic*) results of the strategy
- ✓ Demonstrate that the organization has the ability to implement the strategies
- ✓ Provide details on usage of the requested funds
- ✓ Be clear, complete, easy to understand, and compelling

# Best Practices

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- Review Thoroughly:
  - ✓ Read through grant criteria/requirements & follow directions/instructions.
- Be Specific:
  - ✓ Quantify where possible, provide clear data/research.
- Be Realistic:
  - ✓ Set goals that are specific, achievable, and measurable.
- Create Confidence:
  - ✓ Share your success in implementing the project and/or share the research that the strategy has worked.
- Be Professional:
  - ✓ Review for grammatical and spelling errors; format professionally.

# Best Practices

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- **Avoid Acronyms:**
  - ✓ Avoid using acronyms that are not explained.
- **Be Clear:**
  - ✓ A strong proposal articulates a complete & concise project. Proposal reviewers often try to briefly describe the proposed project.
- **Spell Check:**
  - ✓ Be sure that your application has been reviewed for potential mistakes. Proposals with errors make reviewers question your ability to carry out the proposed project.
- **Consider the Reader:**
  - ✓ Be sure to provide the reader with all necessary information, even if you have applied before or are applying for a renewal; assume the reviewer has no background knowledge.

# Goals vs. Outcomes

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## Goals

- Big picture, conceptual purpose
- Goals should match your outcomes
- *Example:*
  - *Our after-school programs will improve children's literacy skills.*

## Outcomes

- SMART:
  - ✓ **S**pecific
  - ✓ **M**easurable
  - ✓ **A**chievable
  - ✓ **R**elevant
  - ✓ **T**ime-bound
- *Example:*
  - *Our after-school program will assist 50 elementary school students improving their reading scores by one grade level as demonstrated by standardized reading exams administered after participating in the program for six months.*

# Types of SMART Outcomes

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*Please note that there are numerous types of outcomes, some more relevant to your work than others. Here are four example types that are typically used by applicants:*

- **Behavioral:** A human action is anticipated.
- **Performance:** A specific proficiency level is expected.
- **Process:** The manner in which something occurs is an end in itself.
- **Product:** A tangible item results.

# Measuring Outcomes

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## QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

### **Observation:**

- Change in Knowledge
- Change in Attitude/Motivation
- Change in Skills/Behavior
- Interviews/Focus Groups

### **Change in Knowledge:**

- Change in Skills
- Change in Attitude/Motivation

## QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION

### **Pre/Post Survey\* or Tests:**

- Change in Knowledge
- Change in Attitude/Motivation
- Change in Skills

### **Standardized Tests/Grades**

- Change in Test Scores
- Change in Course Grades

*\* Not all surveys are created equal! There are public resources that can help an organization develop valid surveys.*



# Goals, Activities, & Outcomes Document

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EXAMPLE OF A GOALS, OBJECTIVES, & OUTCOMES DOCUMENT:

Primary Goal:	Objectives/Short Term Outcome(s)	Key Activities or Strategies you will use, and the TIMELINE of when activities take place	Type of Data/Date Collection Methods: <i>how do you intend to track progress? What information will you be collecting, how will you collect it, and when will you collect it</i>	Results of Your Activities/Long Term Outcome(s): <i>What are your target results? i.e.- # of people impacted, # of events, quantifiable results of your activities</i>

\* **Reminder: GOALS** are broad whereas intended **OUTCOMES** are specific. **GOALS** are general whereas intended **OUTCOMES** are precise. **GOALS** are generally not measurable whereas intended **OUTCOMES** are observable and measurable.

# Strong Proposal To The Cullen Foundation Will Include:

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- **Project Description:**
  - ✓ Clear project goals
  - ✓ Clear project details, including the specific activities and timelines
- **Project Participants:**
  - ✓ Clear description of who will benefit from the proposed project, including number of participants
  - ✓ Clear description of why the target population is in need of the proposed project or services
- **Project Impact:**
  - ✓ Clear and realistic project outcomes
  - ✓ Clear description of how the project's progress will be assessed, and what indicators or metrics will be used to determine impact
  - ✓ Clear description of how the project's activities and impact may continue beyond the life of the grant
- **Project Budget:**
  - ✓ Clear description of how the grant will be used, including clear calculations and relevant cost expectations

# Resources

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- Colleague: Ask a colleague to review the draft.
- Foundation Center: features a “short course” and a webinar:
  - ✓ [Introduction To Proposal Writing](#)
  - ✓ [Proposal Writing Short Course](#)
- There are many more resources available online. For example, universities have helpful resources associated with Research and Evaluation, Logic Models, and/or Project Management. For Performing Arts, look at State Arts Councils for resources.