

10 tips for writing better project proposals

WHAT

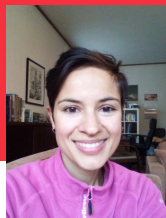


We build better NGOs



We help them to be funded better

WHO



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It takes a lot more than good writing....our top 10 ten tips

1. Preparation is all about the 6Ps
2. Proactive funding portfolios are based on **RESEARCH**
3. Make good **Go/ No go decision**.
4. Show that **you have been training** for this.
5. It's **a team effort**. "Whole-of-organization" approach to proposal writing
6. It's **a marathon**: the effort shouldn't leave you broken/depleted of resources.
7. Have a **realistic/ sustainable budget**.
8. A good budget is half the battle.
9. **START**: Treat your budget development as a project.
10. Templates. Templates. Templates.

The Proposal Process



Prior Proper Preparation Prevents Poor Performance

- Move to proactive management of the funding portfolio
 - Active Pipeline Management
“what we need vs what we can get”
 - Not at mercy of donors
“Not at all costs”
 - Show that funding can achieve (and can't)
 - Links to strategy (not donors)
Funding to match need, not availability of a few donors

- Pipeline management: breaking news - start writing a proposal BEFORE an opportunity opens up.
Never be surprised by an opportunity

Proactive funding portfolios are based on RESEARCH

- Research your existing donor agencies, partners and foundations
- Research your competitors and peers' sources of funds.
- Explore the NGO-donor organization common portals and databases.
- Research thematic and geographic fit

Then, make the Go / No Go Decision

- See Appendix for details



***Your organisation was built for this.
Show it!***

- Your **Theory of Change**: clear, compelling, showing your expertise and why it is critical for success
Example: Investment in ToC
- But it still needs to be... **agile and responsive** to change
- **Relevant to latest needs** (think: local teams & beneficiary driven programme)



It's a team effort

“Whole-of-organization” approach to proposal writing

- Does information flow between departments? (not just RM manager job!)
- Alignment with organisational objectives: does the proposal take you **one step closer to your long-term goals?** *If not, why do it?*
- **Show your readiness & expertise:** how do you operate/work together? Credentials, track record and expertise are there on day 1.



It's a marathon

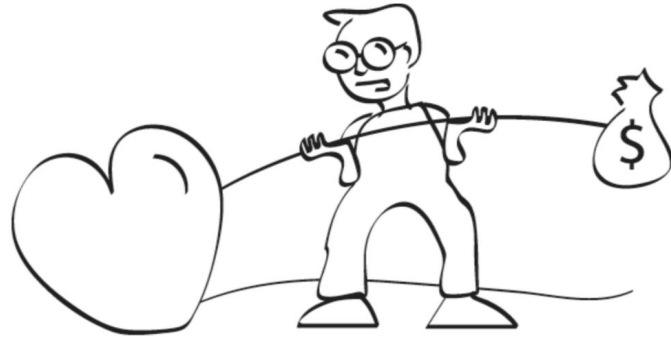
The effort shouldn't leave you broken or depleted of precious resources

- Never write 1 proposal when you write 10 on the same topic.
- Write a **realistic and sustainable budget**: don't over- promise BUT....
- Have a clear VfM rationale for example explaining clearly your unit costs and highlighting costs savings.
- Be ready to **negotiate and know what NOT to agree on**: unrealistic donors expectations and stringent overhead conditions (ex: max. 7%) only perpetuate NGOs **starvation cycle**.



Don't leave budget to last minute... avoid false starts

- Plan enough time! To avoid beginners mistakes: incorrect calculations, donor template not used, budget exceeds ToR
- Not enough details...or too much
- Ensure balance between budget and impact





A good budget is half the battle

A budget is your tool to communicate with a donor. It can say a lot more about the programme and your organisation than just the price of your proposal.

Good budgets key features:

- Openness
- Value for Money
- Capacity
- Competitiveness
- Compliance



START

Treat your budget development as a project

- Develop a project plan with a timeline
- Ensure timeline is in line with proposal requirements
- Build in time for budget review and approval
- Inform stakeholders of the information requirements and timeline.
- Study the financial requirements of the funder and ensure you have the correct templates and information.

Launching 11 April

Fundraising Service

Late 2020 to early 2022

11 April 2022

Early 2020

Spring 2020

Thank you!

Since early 2020 a lot of NGOs reached out to us asking for support on fundraising

We listen!

In Spring 2020 we decided to rise to the challenge and design a really helpful, impactful fundraising service for NGOs

We built!

We may have taken our sweet time over it, but we build a fundraising service that generates income at low costs for the long term

Launching soon!

- 1) 100% digital, global, in 9 languages
- 2) 100% of funding raised goes to the NGO
- 3) Everything you need to launch an effective fundraising function
 - a) Strategy and Results Management
 - b) Graphic design and video production
 - c) Social Media, Search and Mail campaign managers
 - d) Crowdfunding, finance, and market analysis experts

We'd love to stay in touch with you!

Check out our blog and upcoming events on our website: www.mzninternational.com



MzN Funding Support

This is a short summary of our funding support. If you have further questions, please [contact us](#).

[Download](#)

Appendix 1

Go / No Go Decision

- Does it fit your organizational and funding strategy
- Read the fine print - now
- Ask important questions
 - Probability to get the grant
 - Is your project/ organization a good match?
 - Are you able to handle the grant?
 - What resources and time are required for the proposal?
 - Deadline?
 - Do you know the donor / have similar proposal experience?
 - Does the organisation have the capacity to deliver the project if successful?
- Once you have the answers, evaluate and make a decision.
- If it is a go captured it on your systems and move to the next step



Appendix 2: Budget no- nonsense checklist

- Incorrect calculations
- Budget exceeds that in the ToR
- Budget doesn't include all details requested
- Donor template is not used
- No transparency
- Large contingency costs
- Indirect costs too high
- Human Resource costs
- Budget is too large/ small

Behind the scenes, get ready

- Move to proactive management of the funding portfolio
 - Better Pipeline Manageable
 - Not at mercy of donors
 - Links to strategy (not donors)
- Pipeline management: breaking news - start writing a proposal **BEFORE** an opportunity opens up.

Proactive funding portfolios are based on RESEARCH

- Research your existing donor agencies, partners and foundations.
- Research your competitors and peers' sources of funds.
- Explore the NGO-donor organization common portals and databases. Eg devex, fundforngos, reliefweb