Ten Tips to Take the Stress Out of Proposal Writing

These ten tips will help take the stress out of proposal writing and set the stage for great organization.

1. Create a Profile Notes Folder for Your Organization or Business

Any time you run across narrative, news clippings, quotes, history, YouTube etc. about your organization take a moment to save it to a Profile Notes file created especially to pull information quickly at a later date.

2. Create a Framework for Proposal Deadline Dates

Take the time to review funding opportunities for deadlines and create a framework in Excel with the funder's name, the name of the fund, the deadline date and the link for the site. This will cut down the number of unanticipated deadlines and give you more time to prepare.

3. Avoid the Shotgun Approach to Writing Proposals

When creating your framework, leave out funds that might not fit your project. Valuable time can be lost in pursuing funds that are not a right fit for your efforts or that might require more time than what the fund is providing.

4. Talk to the Funder

Talk to the funder honestly about your goals, explain the project and see if your project is a match with the funders' aims. If it's not a fit, at least you've established an introduction for possible future projects.

5. Leave the Technical Expertise to the Experts

If you're involved with writing about projects in sectors such as forestry, fisheries or mining and you're not a professional in these areas, rely upon reports and put some money into the budget to hire a professional to help you create narrative and budgets.

6. Use Web Tools to Acquaint the Funder With Your Project

The web has amazing tools to link the funder directly with your community through Google Maps and social media. Use them by linking directly from your documents.

7. Collect Graphs, Budget and Timeline Templates That Work for You

Recreating graphs, budgets and templates can be time consuming. Save those templates that convey clearly what your aims are and use them for other projects.

8. Make Extra Copies of Financial Statements and Other Important Documents

Funders frequently request financial statements, mandate, incorporation information etc. Take the time to create a special file for these documents and make a few extra hard copies to have on hand.

9. Provide Suggested Letters of Support

You know you have support but some of the people willing to back you might not have the time to write a letter and it may hold up your submission. Suggest providing a draft letter of support.

10. Have a Co-Editor

Final submission time can be tense and editing is critical for clarity, grammar and spelling. You've been looking at the document for a long time. Have a friend or colleague help you review the final draft. If it's a complex proposal, hire a professional editor.