

One kind of proposal

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This section shows how to write one kind of proposal. It may not suit you. It is difficult for those consultants who go into a business, nose around, analyse what they find and come up with results. It is not suitable for policy. It is appropriate for those who are going to produce easily measurable results.

It may be worth separating the processes of preparing the project and writing the proposal.

Much of the preparation could go into several proposals, one's track record and uniqueness for instance.

1. The proposal should emphasize what it will do for
 1. The client organization
 2. Each of the decision makers (this may have to be done discretely)
 3. The financing organization if different from the client.
 4. Individuals in the client organization

It should not say what it will do for you. What you do and how you do it is only relevant in so far as it affects what it will do for them.

2. Show that you have understood their objectives and that it fits in with them. This may be a simple matter of rehashing what is in their TOR if they have one. If you are doing a new proposal, not responding to TOR, then you must find out. It is not always clear who you are working for.
3. Language: Use their language. The words and phrases in the TOR or the words and phrases that they use. This gives confidence that you have understood them. It may be subconscious, but it works.
4. Individuals and organizations want recognition. They should be recognized in the proposals. The proposal should also show how they will get increased recognition through the project. It may build up one individual's empire. It may mean a logo on your car or visiting card. It may mean a PR and dissemination component. This may be part of the formal objectives of the project, or an additional benefit.
5. There are two approaches
 1. Have an idea or a skill and go round and look for someone who will buy it.
 2. Find out what the client wants, and prepare a project that will give it to him or her.

Inevitably, we all have to do a mixture of the two. However, the proposal should be presented as finding what the clients want and giving it to them.

6. INPUTS ACTIVITIES OUTPUTS OUTCOMES

They are looking for outcomes ‘a better world’, ‘Freedom from Hunger’. You can only offer them clearly visible outputs which lead to a measurable goal. For presentation it may be better to work the other way, so that they know what is in it for them before they start reading the detail:

OUTCOMES OUTPUTS ACTIVITIES INPUTS

7. Concerns that must be addressed:

1. Are you working for them and their objectives?
2. Will you do the job?
3. Are you cost effective?
4. Even if cost effective, is the money just too much?
5. *Second XI*
6. Who monitors and controls the consultants?
7. Who monitors and controls the money?
8. No obvious relation between what you say you will do (ACTIVITY) and what you claim your OUTPUT will be.
9. Are you duplicating

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1. Other consultants?
 2. Government?
 3. Public bodies?
 4. Information and advice that is easily available in books and the trade press?
10. What happens when you leave?

Many of these are particularly important with non-commercial clients

What are your assets?

8. You must sell yourself on what you are good at. No one is good at everything.
You must know your weaknesses and you must know the constraints, even if you do not present them to the client.
9. You may be concentrating on factors like your uniqueness, your cost-effectiveness, what you have done in the past.
10. Company credibility
 1. Track record. What you have done in the past.
 2. Especially with same client
 3. Clients
 4. Recommendations

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5. Financial resources
 6. Staff you have access to
 7. Backstopping
 8. If not a straight commercial consultancy, mission statement, objectives, long term plan.
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11. Consultant credibility. How do the consultants on the project measure up
 1. Qualifications
 2. Experience
 3. Track record
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12. Problem credibility. Is the problem you have identified a real and important one?
Is it the key one? If they have identified it, it may be necessary to emphasise that they are right.
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13. Method credibility. Is the method you are going to use credible.
 1. Have you worked out a method?
 2. Is it in the plan?
 3. Can it solve the problem?
 4. Is it cost efficient?
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14. Communication credibility

1. Do you communicate well in the proposal?
2. Will you communicate well in the project?
3. Will you give a comprehensible final report?
4. Is there a PR component?
5. Is there a dissemination component?

Why we are the best people to do the job

1. What makes us the best (above)?

15. Why should they employ us rather than anyone else on the short list (and why indeed should they employ anyone?)

16. What can we do for the clients that no one else can?

17. What can we do for the financiers that no one else can?

18. Fill in this table to help

QUESTION	ANSWER	FEATURES	BENEFIT TO CLIENT	BENEFIT TO DONOR	UNIQUE
WHAT?	Wholesale market	Only one in oblast	Improved marketing	Blueprint for others	No

WHERE? Verkoyansk Miningnear cons- Visible No
Town umers
in Siberia

WHO? Mr Smith Expert MarketNo disaster Yes
In markets will work (embarassing)
profitably Loan repaid

WHEN?

HOW?

WHY?

GOALS, OUTCOMES AND OBJECTIVES

2. Goals and outcomes are broad policy

19. Objectives are specific, measurable and time bound. These carry a great deal of weight with clients. They should

1. Specify a result, an OUTPUT not an ACTIVITY

2. Each should normally state just one result. Clearly this can get out of hand

with a big project having fifty or sixty results.

3. It should be in the form 'to (verb)'
4. It should specify WHAT will be done WHEN, not WHY or HOW
5. It should be feasible with the resources available
6. It should be designed in consultation with a working consultant, preferably the one who will do the job. Far too often it is done by an office junior or someone who is a seller rather than a doer.
7. It should be based on inputs from the client and ideally those affected, such as the customers.
8. Cost limits should be specified
9. It should be specific, measurable and verifiable. (Note dangers if you are not only person)
10. Flexible

Note that this is in essence the Logical Framework approach



20. Fill in this problem worksheet:

1. What is the problem?
2. Who is affected by it? (E.g. prisoners, single parents, ethnic minorities are all selling points)
3. Related problems?
4. Who is affected by them?
5. Size of problem?
6. Cost of problem?
7. Causes of Problem?
8. What will happen if no action is taken?
9. Who should act?