

Fund Raising Protocol

A Mentoring Program for Local Project Leaders

Phase I: Project Conceptualization

Evaluating a Concept's Potential for Funding

The evolution of a project and its likelihood for attracting funding begins with a one to two page “white paper,” or strategy outline. This *internal document* should answer the following very important questions:

1. What community need would the project fulfill?
2. What are the goals and objectives of the project?
3. What evaluation mechanism will be used to measure success?
4. How does the project complement the mission of *Earth Stewards*?
5. What are the project's possible “supplementary” benefits – social, economic, etc. In other words, what possible “side-effect” benefits might result as a consequence of the achievement of overall project goals?

After local site coordinators firmly establish their project goals in a concise “white paper,” the funding request process can formally begin.

Phase II: Initiating Foundation Contact and Proposal Drafting

Letters of Inquiry

Often a funder will request that a letter of inquiry be submitted prior to a formal proposal. A letter of inquiry (one page or less) is basically an even more concise “white paper” to be drafted by site coordinators, and should provide the following information:

- The problem the project wishes to address
- The method that will be used to address the problem
- A budget that encompasses the estimated costs of the project
- The type and amount of support sought from the funder
- Other potential providers of funding or in-kind services

After the letter of inquiry is sent, the site coordinator should follow-up with a phone call to the funder (usually within 2-3 weeks) to make sure the letter was received and to find out if the funder has questions regarding the project or needs any additional information.

Phase III: Proposal Submission, Follow-up, and Acknowledgments

Proposals

The full grant proposal may be the only opportunity a site coordinator has to convince a funder that the project is worthy of its investment. Grant makers review hundreds of proposals every year, so they need to be able to quickly see how a project will put their money to work to benefit society and further their goals. It is the responsibility of the site coordinator to know the

substance of a project and to work with Keystone staff in turning this information into a proposal, which most often incorporates the following structure:

1. **Cover letter** – The cover letter highlights the features of the proposal most likely to be of interest to the foundation. It should point out how you selected the funder and why you believe they will be interested in the project. Include the specific amount of money and type of support we are seeking.
2. **A summary of the project** – This describes the purpose of the project, the total budget for the project, the specific amount requested from the funder, the plan of action, and the anticipated results. This should not exceed one page. The introduction should include the amount requested. (Information from the “white paper” will be used here.)
3. **Introduction to your project** – Don’t assume that grant decision-makers reading the proposal will be familiar with your project and its partnerships and accomplishments. This section will provide the funder with background information on our program, thereby building confidence in your ability to do the specific project.
4. **Problem statement** – This section simply and clearly states the societal problem or need the project will address. There is a fine line between painting a compelling picture of need and describing a problem that is overwhelmingly complex. It is appropriate to discuss recent studies, statistics, public statements related to the problem, etc. It is then necessary to convince the funder that upon these lessons; the project will offer a unique contribution towards a resolution.
5. **Goals and objectives** – *Goals* are the ultimate accomplishments a project could achieve and, as such, are often not entirely attainable. *Objectives*, on the other hand, are based on realistic expectations about the anticipated results of a project. In this section a project’s potential impact on society should be stressed.
6. **Implementation methods and schedule** – Describe your specific plan of action and how long it will take to measurably accomplish your goals and objectives. Give desired starting and completion dates for activities. Note the key people involved in and committed to the project as well as their qualifications. Note staff qualifications.
7. **Evaluation criteria and procedures** – Evaluation criteria provide a measure for determining how effective the project has been in reaching its stated objectives. Evaluation mechanisms should be built into the design of the project as a continuous monitoring system. The evaluative section of a proposal is very important to the funder and should therefore be strong.
8. **Budget** – Try to anticipate all expenses for a project in advance. It is unrealistic to expect additional funding to cover needs overlooked in an initial request. In this section, additional sources of funding should be listed for leveraging purposes.

Following the submission of a proposal, Keystone staff will direct site coordinators to make a follow-up phone call to the funder (usually within 2-3 weeks) to make sure the proposal was received and to find out if there are additional materials the funder needs to process the request. The decision-making process for foundations and corporations can take anywhere from a few weeks to six months.

Communication with Funders (proposals, deadlines, reports, follow-up)

It is the responsibility of the site coordinators to coordinate communication with local funders.

Timing, Deadlines, and Restrictions

Timing is an essential element of the grant application process. Grant decisions are typically tied to Board meetings that can be held as infrequently as once or twice a year. Most foundations and corporations need to receive grant applications at least two to three months in advance of Board meetings to allow time for review and investigation, and some may require an even longer lead-time. As a rule, the proposal process from start to finish takes between three to six months. Potential restrictions on funding include such things as geographic considerations or the funder only accepting proposals if three years have elapsed since their last grant to your organization.

Reports

It is the responsibility of site coordinators to track report deadlines. The Keystone Center staff will assist site coordinators in writing narrative reports and finance staff in the necessary financial reporting.

Acknowledgments

Site coordinators will be responsible for acknowledging a funder’s support with a letter of thanks and/or press releases and appropriate publications.

Fund Raising Protocol Checklist

Phase I: Project Conceptualization

- Talk with The Keystone Center staff in the earliest stages of conceptualization in order to be sure fund raising aspects of the project are being considered.
- Draft “white paper,” an internal document outlining the project and its goals.
- NEST will work with site coordinators to devise tracking mechanisms that will detail information and action steps for fund raising strategies.

Phase II: Initiating Foundation Contact and Proposal Drafting

- Letters of Inquiry will be drafted by site coordinators with the assistance of The Keystone Center staff.
- After the letter of inquiry is sent, the site coordinator should follow-up with a phone call to the funder (usually within 2-3 weeks).

Phase III: Proposal Submission, Follow-up and Acknowledgments

- Proposals should make a clear and concise case for funding. It is the responsibility of site coordinators to understand the substance of a project proposal and to work with The Keystone Center staff in answering the compelling questions a proposal addresses.
 - Cover letter
 - Project summary
 - Introduction to your project
 - Problem statement
 - Goals and objectives
 - Implementation methods and schedule
 - Evaluation criteria and procedures
 - Budget

- Site coordinators should make a follow-up phone call to funders, usually within 2-3 weeks.

- Acknowledgments**
Site coordinators will be responsible for acknowledging a funder's support with a letter of thanks and/or press releases and appropriate publications.