

A free guide from Elevate STEM

Grant Writing Guide

If you want money for a research project or a scholarship, you'll probably have to write a grant proposal. This guide walks through the parts of one, a few tips, the mistakes we see most often, and a template you can adapt.

What goes in a proposal

- 1 Cover letter**
Who you are, a short summary of the project, and what you're asking for.
- 2 Executive summary**
An overview of the project, what you hope to achieve, and how much funding you need.
- 3 Problem statement**
The issue your project tackles, with evidence that it matters.
- 4 Objectives**
Goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound. (People call these SMART goals.)
- 5 Project description**
What you'll actually do, your timeline, and who on the team is responsible for what.
- 6 Budget**
An itemized list of costs, why each one is needed, and any other funding you already have.
- 7 Evaluation plan**
How you'll measure whether the project worked.
- 8 Appendices**
Anything that supports your case, like resumes or letters of support.

Tips

- **Research the funder.** Learn what they care about and shape your proposal around it.
- **Follow their instructions exactly.** Format, length, deadline, all of it.
- **Be clear and concise.** Plain language beats fancy language. Cut the filler.
- **Back it up.** Use data and evidence to show why your project matters.
- **Proofread.** Then have a friend proofread it too.

Common mistakes

- **Ignoring the guidelines.** Some funders reject proposals automatically if they don't follow the rules.
- **Vague goals.** "Help students learn science" is too fuzzy. Make your objectives specific and measurable.
- **Promising too much.** Be realistic about what you can get done during the funding period.
- **No evidence.** Claims without data behind them make the whole proposal weaker.
- **A sloppy budget.** Every cost should be realistic and explained.

Proposal template

Change this to fit whatever the funder asks for.

Cover letter

[Your Name]

[Your Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

[Email Address]

[Phone Number]

[Date]

[Funder's Name]

[Funder's Address]

[City, State, ZIP Code]

Dear [Funder's Name],

I'm writing to apply for the [Grant Name] to support [Project Title]. This project aims to [briefly state the objectives]. We are requesting [amount] to fund this work.

Thank you for considering our proposal.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Executive summary

[A short summary of your project: its goals, why it matters, and how much you're asking for.]

Problem statement

[The problem your project addresses, with evidence that it matters.]

Objectives

1. [Objective 1]
2. [Objective 2]
3. [Objective 3]

Project description

[What you'll do, your timeline, and who does what.]

Budget

Item	Description	Cost
[Item 1]	[Description]	[Cost]
[Item 2]	[Description]	[Cost]
[Item 3]	[Description]	[Cost]
Total		[Total]

Evaluation plan

[How you'll measure success, and the methods you'll use.]

Appendices

[Any extra documents that support your proposal.]

— *The Elevate STEM team*