

Preparing Proposals

Successful proposals can reward those who take the trouble and effort to prepare them. The task of proposal preparation is the same as other tasks in that it involves taking one step after another until you are done. You don't have to be a large corporation with unlimited resources to write an effective proposal. What you need is a valuable project, a feasible objective and a personal record that shows you can accomplish the proposed work.

Requests for proposals (RFP's) normally give detailed instructions concerning what elements to include in a proposal. You should follow all instructions exactly. Give them what they ask for or run the risk of having your proposal returned to you as incomplete or rejected out-of-hand as non-responsive. RFP's differ in content but most will be required to contain most if not all of the following elements in the final proposal package:

- a) Cover Letter
- b) Title Page
- c) Table of Contents
- d) Proposal Summary or Abstract
- e) Introduction
- f) Statement of the Research Problem or Program
- g) Objectives and Expected Benefits of the Project
- h) Description of the Project
- i) Timetable for the Project
- j) Key Project Participants
- k) Project Budget
- l) Administrative Provisions and Organizational Chart
- m) Alternate Funding
- n) Post-Project Planning
- o) Appendices and Support Material
- p) Bibliography and References

Following is a six-point guideline for writing effective proposals:

- 1) **Establish technical credibility** - strongly reinforce the impression of technical expertise and firmly establish your technical credentials. This is a good time to trumpet your achievements but be careful not to make false claims which could damage your credibility.

- 2) **Use a client centered approach** - write the proposal from the client's perspective. It is essential that you both understand the problem and prove that its' objectives will be achieved by you carrying out the contract.
- 3) **Try to get the price right** - this is probably the most difficult part. You need to consider of try to find out what the market price for the project is, what approximate budget the client has in mind, what is the importance of price in relation to other factors in the proposal, who the competition is and what they will charge, and how important this project is to you. Times will arise when you should not submit a bid simply because you are not in a position to bid competitively.
- 4) **Write simply** - the use of a simple and easy to use style builds credibility with the reader because you have been able to explain a complex subject in an understandable manner.
- 5) **Add unique selling points** - try to make your proposal stand out from the crowd. Think of something that makes your company better than the others and use it.
- 6) **Go the extra mile** - do a little extra and it may help you. For instance, put nicely designed covers on a proposal instead of plain ones. While style cannot hide a lack of substance in a proposal, style and substance can make a powerful combination.

For more information:

Internet: <http://www.bcbid.gov.bc.ca> (BC bid site)