

3. Proposal Writing Fact Sheet*

Raising funds is an investment in the future.

Proposal writing is essential to securing external resources to develop new and innovative projects and programs that serve First Nations citizens.

A good proposal can help turn a good idea into reality and link both funder and recipient in an investment partnership.

First Nations have the ideas, knowledge and capacity to solve problems, but may lack the resources to reach their goals.

Governments, foundations and corporations have the financial resources but cannot always create projects and programs that can effect change. Bring the two together effectively and a dynamic collaboration can result.

Any project strikes to find a balance between the needs of each party and a proposal puts it all in writing.

Proposals can help turn good ideas into reality.

This fact sheet provides some general information to help Yukon First Nations develop proposals.

Note that the proposal writing steps below are not a formula to be followed but rather a suggested approach that can be adapted to meet your needs.

The steps need not be sequential. For example, you may wish to talk to possible funders first to see what they are funding before brainstorming your ideas and concepts.

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Proposal Preparation Steps

1. **Identify Your Idea or Concept** – Start by determining what it is that you want to do and how it can be developed into a project.

Ask: Is your idea consistent with the mandate, philosophy or mission of your organization, department or office? Can we turn this idea into a project?

2. **Project Research and Development** – Explore your idea and determine why it is important and how it can be turned into a project. Gather background research to support the need for this project as you will need to demonstrate relevance.

Ask: Why is it important to do this project? Why now? Is anyone else doing this kind of project? Does this project build on previous efforts or enhance our existing work? Who will fund this project and why?

3. **Define your Project** – The following are components of a project that will need to be defined:
 - a. Goals and objectives of your project
 - b. Project outcomes
 - c. Target audience for your efforts
 - d. Timeline of activities
 - e. Staff or volunteers required
 - f. Other resource requirements (contractors for training, facilities rental, office space etc)
 - g. Evaluation Plan

Good proposals are created when others are consulted to test, refine and develop your ideas.

4. **Determine Expenses** – Based on the determination of factors noted above, begin to research what your project will cost. Sketch out the broad outlines of the budget to be sure that the costs are in reasonable proportion to the outcomes you anticipate. If it appears that the costs will be very high, you will need to scale back your plans or adjust them accordingly. Revise your budget as project components are confirmed.

5. **Understand Funding Requirements** – Some funders will require matching funds contributed by your organization or “in-kind” contributions, so check with them about project guidelines and requirements. “In kind” contributions are non-cash contributions made to a project, which can be given a measurable cash value. An in-kind contribution is a real contribution to the total cost of the project, but is not reimbursable as no monies change hands. An example of an in-kind contribution is the use of your office space or facilities for the project, or staff time that will be spent on it that you will pay for.
6. **Refine and Develop your Proposal with Help from Partners** – Good proposals are created when others are consulted to test, refine and develop your ideas. Those consulted or involved in project development may include individuals in your organization, potential community partners who can contribute to your work, or those that may be affected by the project. Involving those that stand to benefit from the project early ensures that the project is supported and endorsed and that the best project possible is developed. Lessons can be learned from others who have done similar projects in the past as part of your project research.
7. **Develop a Relationship with Your Funder** – Many funders are willing to review proposals, offer comments and assist with improvements to help ensure the success of your proposal. Some may ask for short “**Concept Papers**”, which summarize the main project goals, objectives and outcomes. These short papers can help funders determine if they would like you to develop a full proposal. They also can save you a great deal of time and effort by offering funders some key ideas from which a decision can be taken on whether to move forward. Because developing a full proposal can be a very time consuming exercise, short project summaries circulated to a number of funders can serve to test ideas without investing huge efforts. Better to find out early that your idea is not presently fundable before investing in writing a full proposal.

**Talk to your funders –
better to find out early that your idea is not
presently fund-able before
investing in writing a full proposal.**

8. Final Proposal Structure

A general structure for the final project document is indicated below. Note that the length may vary with project complexity.

Executive Summary	Statement of your case and a very short summary of the entire proposal	1 - 2 pages
Project Rationale	Why this project is necessary?	1 - 3 pages
Project Description	Project description summary	1 - 6 pages
Budget	Financial summary and explanatory notes	1 - 2 pages
Organizational Information	History structure and activities of your organization	1 - 2 pages
Conclusion	Summary of proposal's main points	3 paragraphs

Who Should Write Our Proposal?

There are advantages and disadvantages of hiring consultants to write proposals for you:

a. Advantages

- Consultants are professional writers who know the language and format of preparing these often complicated documents – hiring one can save staff time and resources.
- Consultants can often prepare proposals more quickly due to their experiences with funders and thus, can respond to tight funder deadlines.

a. Disadvantages

- Hiring professionals can be costly if budgets are tight.
- Some consultants may have insufficient awareness of the needs of your community or the complexity of delivering projects to certain audiences, resulting in ill-prepared projects.

In the Yukon, a number of companies and consultants assist First Nations in writing proposals. **A list that contains contractors contact information is in Section Two of the Toolkit.** Note that inclusion in this list does not constitute an endorsement by Health Canada or the Council of Yukon First Nations.