

Proposal Preparation Guidelines (CIMMYT)

All Proposals Should Convey:

- Please read this!
- An important thing needs doing!
- Here is a sensible, feasible and cost effective way of doing it!
- Here is an institute that is equipped to do the job!
- All that is needed is your support!

Proposal Preparation

Technical Writing Tips:

- Think first
- Have reader in mind
- Prefer short words
- Use synonyms
- Watch loose usage
- Prefer short sentences
- Prefer active voice
- Varied sentence lengths make for readability.
- Be generous with paragraphs
- Do not write journal articles
- Be invisible
- Sound positive, use “will”

Basic Proposal Format

- | | | |
|--------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I. | Summary | (What is this proposal about?) |
| II. | Background | (Why should this proposal be done?) |
| III. | Objectives | (What do you hope to achieve?) |
| IV. | Activities | (What will you do?) |
| V. | Outputs | (What will result from the project?) |
| VI. | Work Plan | (How will you achieve the outputs?) |
| VII. | Evaluation | (Have the objectives been achieved? What else have you learned?) |
| VIII. | Budget | (How much will it cost?) |

Writing the Proposal: A 10-Step Model

We suggest you prepare your proposals in the following order:

- | | |
|----------|---------------------------|
| Step 1: | Objectives |
| Step 2: | Activities |
| Step 3: | Work Plan |
| Step 4: | Budget |
| Step 5: | Background |
| Step 6: | Outputs |
| Step 7: | Monitoring & Evaluation |
| Step 8: | Introduction and Summary |
| Step 9: | Review & Editing |
| Step 10: | Send to DG or Equivalent. |

Step 1 Objectives: What do you want to achieve?

- Are the objectives valuable? To whom?
- Are the objectives clear?
- Are the objectives measurable?
- Are the objectives realistic in terms of available inputs?

Tips:

- Consult with others
- Spend time thinking
- Get the words right
- Don't promise more than you can do.

Step 2 Activities: What will you do?

- Be brief, be clear
- Be positive - use "will"
- Justifications belong in Background section
- Include section on Methodology

Step 3 Work Plan: How will you achieve the objectives?

Administrative Arrangements (Which party will do what?)

- Center
- Collaborators (AROs)
- NARs
- Donors
- Farmer Groups or equivalent

C Input and Level of Effort

- Center International and Local Staff
- Collaborator Staff
- Consultants
- Equipment (vehicles, computers, office space...)

C Time Plans

- Graphs, Charts

C Reporting

- Semi-Annual plus Final Report

Step 4 Budget: How much will it cost?

Tips:

- C Use Budget Guidelines
- C Be realistic, not greedy
- C Do not under-budget
- C Always include unit costs
- C Check local costs
- C Remember that indirect costs are as legitimate and necessary as direct costs

Step 5 Background: Why should the project be done?

Options:

- C Describe context
- C Identify problem, need for project
- C Say what's already been done
- C Show Center's comparative advantage
- C Describe beneficiaries, farmers

Tips:

- C Be short, crisp, readable
- C Use headings
- C Maximum two pages
- C Extra in annexes
- C Soft se on Center

Step 6 Outputs: What will the project results be?

- C Who/what is better off?
 - Farmers?
 - Agency officials?
 - Researchers (AROs and/or NARs)?
 - Sector?
 - Region?
 - Economy?
 - country?
- C In what way?
 - Higher yields?
 - Higher farmer incomes?
 - Institutional improvements?
 - Better awareness? Understanding?
 - More participation?
 - Farmer improvement?
 - Public sector accountability?
 - Lessons for decision-makers?
 - Lessons for other countries?
 - Need for more research?
 - Spin-off benefits?
 - Quantify as much as possible

**Step 7 Monitoring & Evaluations: *How will you know if you're on tract?
If you project is successful?***

Tips:

- C Mention Center's monitoring systems
- C Do not omit this section in proposal

Option:

- C Internal vs. external
- C Baseline study

- C Include as project activity
- C Include in semi-annual reports
- C Make separate project

Step 8 Introduction & Summary: *What is this proposal all about?*

Tips:

- C Write last
- C Key section-write carefully
- C Allude to every other section
- C Be short, be clear, be readable
- C Maximum two pages
- C Highlight stakeholder interest.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION & SUMMARY

This proposal requests.....(donor) to provide (\$).....for Center to.....(project objective (s) summarized) in(country/program theme). The proposed project will take....years and involve...person/years/person months of Center and collaborator staff time. The need for the project/study/activity is press; (tell why in one or two sentences). The host country and Center are anxious to begin the project soon...(describe role of host country/partner in preparing proposal, inputs will make).

The project will benefit (identify beneficiaries-give numbers if possible) by (tell why). As a results...(yields or incomes will increase? Agencies will operate more smoothly? Needed information will be available?)

This project follows on from preliminary work by...that suggested...Center id ideally suited to conduct these follow-on activities because...(tell why).

Step 9: Review and Editing

Please take this step before sending your proposal to your DG for sending to the donor. You will easily catch all sorts of error that will be harder for others to notice.

You may well be able to substantially shorten the proposal at this point.

Step 10: Send proposal to DG or equivalent

1. If the proposal is prepared in a country office, send to HZ sponsor for review.
2. Proposal Review.

PROPOSAL BUDGET GUIDELINES

PURPOSE:

1. Make an accurate prediction of costs of project.
2. Persuade someone (Donor/Program Leader) to provide the funds

GOOD BUDGET ARE: Inclusive, Accurate and Transparent

FEATURES:

1. Accurate unit costs
2. Full menu of line items
3. Contingency and inflation for multi-year projects
4. Assumptions spelled out in footnotes

BASIC BUDGET FORMAT

- LXI. Salaries
- LXII. Travel
- LXIII. Services and Supplies
- LXIV. Training, Workshops & Fellowships
- LXV. Publications
- Sub-Total
- LXVI. Indirect costs
- LXVII. Contract Research
- LXVIII. Vehicles and Equipment
- Sub-Total
- LXIX. Contingency
- LXX. Inflation
- Total

FOOTNOTE GUIDELINES

(to be used in first draft budgets)

TRAVEL

International Travel

- C Footnote should specify number of round trip flights and destinations
- C Flight costs should include estimate of travel expenses
- C Travel expenses include lodging, food, taxis, airport taxes
- C Field proposals should include international travel for HQ inputs
- C HQ inputs may mean travel from field to HQ or travel from HQ to field of both

[Note: HQ inputs may be a bay window]

Local Travel

- C Do not under-budget
- C Include domestic flights, lodging, food, ground transportation

SALARIES AND BENEFITS

International Salaries and Benefits

- C Average person year costs
- C Average person month costs

National Salaries and Benefits

- C Sponsor provides unit costs, based on local conditions.
- C Anticipate costs one year ahead, when project implemented
- C Include number of staff and individual salary levels
- C Give separate line items for professional and support staff

FELLOWSHIPS

Include this line item if possible. May be a bay window, unless integral part of project.

- C Specify number of fellows
- C Duration of fellowships
- C Include transport, lodging and sustenance costs/fellow
- C Include some supervision time
- C Include local travel and equipment/fellow

SUPPLIES AND SERVICES

This item includes all supplies and services attributable to the project:

- C Office supplies
- C Telephone, fax, telex, e-mail, postage
- C Maintenance of project vehicles and equipment
- C Insurance of project vehicles and equipment
- C Rent and utilities for project-specific accommodation

TRAINING

- C Specify if on-the job or informal (including study tours)
- C If formal, specify location (e.g. international, regional, provincial)
- C Include following costs:
 - < Site costs/participants
 - < Participant travel, lodging and food
 - < Trainer(s) travel, lodging and food
 - < Staff time for inputs
 - < Consultant fees
 - < Training materials and equipment

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- C Monitoring may involve HQ inputs—staff time, transport, etc.

- C Evaluation may be external or internal
- C For external evaluation assume:
 - < Two weeks of evaluator's time, plus travel, lodging, etc.
 - < One week of Center staff inputs (outside project staff), plus travel, etc.
- C Some donors find their own evaluations—if so, omit in proposal
- C External evaluation may be a bay window

PUBLICATIONS

- C May include audio-visual as well as written materials
- C Covers project reporting as well as research publications
- C Budget may include:
 - < Training materials costs
 - < Dissemination costs
 - < Translation costs
 - < Public awareness materials (brochures, calling cards)

CONTRACT RESEARCH

- C Do not under-budget
- C Obtain good local rates, by asking for quotations
- C Consult on costs with others who contract local research

VEHICLES & OTHER EQUIPMENT

- C Itemize carefully in footnotes, giving number and type
- C Include all project-specific items costing over \$500.00 and with a useful life of 3 years or more, such as:
 - < Calculators, computers and accessories
 - < Other office equipment, including furniture, copiers, fax machines
 - < Measuring devices
 - < Trucks, cars, motorbikes

INDIRECT COSTS

- C Indirect costs charged on all previous mentioned items.
- C Indirect costs not charged in equipment and contract research
- C Breakdown time line items in proposal budgets
- C Must be included in all first draft budget
- C There are alternatives presentation options:
 - < "Normal"
 - < "Explicit"
 - < "Hidden" or "Distributed"

INFLATION

- C Charges on second and subsequent years of multi-year projects
- C Provide rate that is appropriate for your location

- C Inflation rates are compounded

CONTINGENCY

- C Include in all multi-year budgets
- C Level may be negotiated
- C Average rate 5%-6%, higher for complex projects in remote areas

BAY WINDOWS

A project “Bay Window” is something that can be “given away” by the Center during project budget negotiations without endangering the feasibility of the project, or its interest to the Center budget negotiations without endangering the feasibility of the project, or its interest to the Center.

Examples of bay windows:

- C National Workshops
- C Study Tours
- C Linkages with other Centers of Excellence
- C Inclusion of additional field sites
- C Optional equipment

Having a “Bay Window” to give away makes it more likely that the budget of the essential project will escape the negotiator’s knife.