

# Proposal Planning Basics

**\*\*Adopted from Osceola Florida School District [Grant Management Center](#)\*\***

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## Plan Your Project:

***A grant proposal is a plan for change, NOT a request for money.*** Before your department decides to apply for a grant opportunity, make sure you have done the proper planning and research. Have you:

1. Developed an initial statement of perceived needs?
2. Verified the existence of the needs through an analysis of qualitative and quantitative data that involves all stakeholders?
3. Prioritized the identified needs?
4. Decided which needs will be addressed in the proposal?
5. Translated the needs into a goal statement?
6. Considered alternative strategies to achieve the goal?
7. Selected a strategy/strategies and based on a sound rationale?
8. Reviewed your findings with appropriate staff and stakeholders?
9. Considered, with other key staff, all internal resources that could support the project

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## Check for "Fund-ability":

After you've done your preliminary research, consider whether your project is a good prospect for external grant funding. In most cases, proposals that are attractive to funding agencies have one or more of the following characteristics (the more, the better):

1. The project is new or innovative.
2. The project is cost-effective.
3. The project will be continued with local funds after the grant period ends.
4. A clear need for the project has been documented with qualitative and quantitative data.
5. The project is timely; it addresses a significant regional, statewide, or national problem which goes beyond your department.
6. The project will expand current knowledge or practice in the field.
7. The project can be easily replicated in other areas.
8. The project involves stakeholders in planning, implementation, and/or evaluation.
9. The project includes specific commitments and support from stakeholders.

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## **Review Your Motives:**

Remember, grant funds are temporary. They are designed to accomplish a public purpose in a specific period of time or to provide start-up funds for projects that will be supported locally after the grant period ends. Generally, grant funds are **NOT** a good source for:

- compensating for budget cutbacks or shortfalls
- filling staff shortages
- filling gaps in the operating budget

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## **Align Your Project and Obtain Local Support:**

If the project appears to be fundable, now is the time to develop a concept paper (an overview of your project). Before taking that next step, ask these important questions:

1. Is the potential project consistent with plans and goals of the county?
2. Can the project be undertaken without jeopardizing the other priorities of the county?
3. Is what we want to accomplish realistic?
4. Have I discussed the project with and obtained approval from my supervisor?
5. Have I discussed the project with other appropriate staff who would be involved with, affected by, or responsible for any aspect of the project?
6. Have I consulted with all appropriate community stakeholders who would be affected by or involved with the project?

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## **Find the Money:**

If you have answered "yes" to all of the above and developed a concept paper, you can begin searching for an appropriate agency to fund your project (often, the proposal planning process is initiated in response to a specific funding opportunity, so this step is already done).

1. Are you eligible to submit a proposal to this funding opportunity?
2. Does my project match the priorities and interests of the funding agency?
3. Are the odds of the proposal being funded good enough that it's worth the effort of preparing a proposal? Consider how much money is available, how many grants will be awarded, and how many applications the agency expects to receive.
4. Is the grant award amount specified in the announcement appropriate to the scope of my project?
5. Are the costs for which support will be requested allowable?
6. Is there enough time to design the project; obtain commitment from stakeholders (including matching funds, if required); write a compelling proposal; obtain required clearance, review and signatures; and meet the submission deadline?
7. Have I contacted the appropriate Grant Contact to discuss this project?

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## **WRITE THE PROPOSAL:**

If you have answered "YES" to the above questions, then writing the full proposal is the next step. Conversely, if you answered "NO" to any of the above questions, it would be best not to submit a proposal at this time.