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10 April 2014

Dear Friends,

This week's Newsflash provides some tips on proposal writing. Sustainability of organizations is often directly related to funding. Writing strong proposals that get funded allows you to partner with many organizations and not be dependent on just one source of grant funding.

Often when applying for funding, you will be asked to submit a 'concept note' or 'letter of interest' before you are asked to submit a proposal. Below are some resources on writing a concept note, and also some common mistakes that people make when writing grant proposals.

We hope you enjoy this week's edition of the Newsflash!

Sincerely,

The Firelight Team

*(Resource) How to summarize a Full Proposal into a Short Concept Note*

*(Resource) The 10 Most Common Grant Writing Mistakes*

*(Call for Proposals) Project Inspire 2014: Grants to Inspire the Young People for Empowerment*

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(Resource) How to summarize a Full Proposal into a Short Concept Note

Source: Funds for NGOs

The submission of concept notes is increasingly becoming the first step in the application for funding to the main agencies and private donors. This is how your potential donor will make the first selection among a large group of project proposals to assess their potential. Accordingly, concept notes could be solicited directly by the donor, but they could also become the way in which an NGO approaches a potential sponsor to test their interest in the NGO's ongoing activities. Thus, concept notes must be clear, specific, and attractive to the reader.

Concept notes are a shorter version of a project proposal and their length typically spans from 3 to 5 pages (if the sponsor you are approaching does not give a clear indication, keep it to 3 pages; the shorter the better). The main difficulty with writing concept notes is producing a summary that simultaneously catches the attention of the reader and elaborates

the main issues at stake, all the while keeping the amount of information given at minimum. Do not overwhelm the reader. The concept notes must capture the audience's attention and make your potential sponsor curious about your project, and willing to get to know you and your ideas better.

Start with an eye-catching title.

First paragraph: background of the project. Explain why this project is important, for whom, and what has already been done in the selected field of intervention.

Second paragraph: objectives and beneficiaries. Limit your objectives to a maximum of three. Remember that your objectives must be connected to the background of the project. Once you have singled out the problems you are targeting, be specific about how your project will address these problems and what the desired results will be. It is important to be specific and clear about each of your objectives and explain who will benefit from the development of the project. Specify who your target group is, why it is important to work with this target group, and how the participants in the project will benefit from your activities. Remember that on the one hand, the target group will receive immediate benefits from the completion of the projects (such as attending workshops, training etc.) but also the community will benefit from the various projects implemented by your NGO in the long run. Accordingly, write a sentence explaining how this project will benefit your community by looking at the big picture (you can address the social, political or economic situation of your community and link this project with the main goals of your NGO).

Third paragraph: outputs. For each of your objectives there must be an output. It is of crucial importance that the donor understands how your objectives are to be assessed in order to monitor the development of the project and its results; therefore outputs must be concrete and tangible.

Fourth paragraph: activities and duration. The activities are the ways in which your objectives will produce an output. Accordingly, activities must be concrete and they should give an idea of how you aim to reach a given goal. Importantly, each activity must have a beginning and end point, so make sure they all have a set duration, which will depend on the length of the overall project.

Fifth paragraph: monitoring and evaluation. How will the donor assess the results of your project? Elaborate on the methods necessary in order to enable your sponsor to monitor the development of the project and to evaluate its partial and final results in a practical way (how do you measure the fulfillment of set objectives?)

Include a budget only if specifically required.

To read the full blog post, please visit: <http://bit.ly/Pr1rWX>

(Resource) The 10 Most Common Grant Writing Mistakes

Source: by Waddy Thomson, author of *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Grant Writing*, Third Edition

Writing grants requires a certain level of technical knowledge and finesse, but many proposals never get fair consideration because of amateurish mistakes that are easily avoided. Here are a few of the most common ones that are guaranteed to sink your proposal on contact with the funder.

1. Not following instructions. This has got to be the biggest mistake, even though it's the easiest one to avoid. Foundations, corporations, and government agencies receive thousands of grant proposals, and one way they sort the amateurs from the professionals is to see who followed directions. If the funder requires a three-year budget, create one. If they want you to use paper clips instead of staples, use them.
2. Failing to thoroughly research the funders' interests. Each funder has an interest in making grants for a particular purpose—sometimes a very specific purpose. Many grant proposals never have a chance of success because of superficial research. It's not enough to know that the foundation makes grants for education. Do they support K-12? Higher education? The answers to all those questions can be yours by simply reading all of the foundation's guidelines.
3. Focusing the proposal on the needs of your organization. Keep in mind that a funder's goals are achieved not when you make payroll, but when you deliver the service your nonprofit provides to the people who need it. So you don't ask for \$10,000 to prevent your food bank from having a deficit; you ask for \$10,000 to feed 7,000 people. Even if you're asking for operating support, be sure to include how your nonprofit will do more for more people by receiving the grant you're requesting.
4. Careless editing. Pity the poor program officer who has to read 600 grant proposals on the same topic. How do you think she'll feel when she has to re-read your sentences because of typos and grammatical errors? Keep her on your side. Spell check and have a friend proof read.
5. Preaching to the choir. Never assume the funder knows anything about your organization, especially when it comes to describing your capacity to carry out the project for which you seek funding. And while you're at it, avoid catch phrases and jargon. Clear, simple language wins the day.
6. Not asking for the money. You wouldn't believe how many people forget to include the amount of the grant they seek in the proposal. The people at the foundation aren't

mind readers! Be explicit, usually in the first sentence or two about how much you would like for them to give you.

7. Asking for the wrong amount. This mistake is closely related to number 2. In your research, you should determine what size grants the funder has made to similar organizations. When you look at their grants list, you'll see that most funders have a number they seem fond of. Asking for substantially less or more than their typical grant will end in failure.
8. Submitting sloppy budgets. You may be familiar with three or four budgets for programs like the one for which you're seeking funding, but the program officer at the funder has seen hundreds if not thousands of similar budgets. She will know immediately if your budget is reasonable for your project. If you've left out a major item, she'll know. If you've padded the salaries, she'll know. The budget that accompanies a grant proposal should be prepared with the same care as the narrative description and match it point for point.
9. Submitting a proposal late. This is absolutely the most amateurish and easily avoided mistake, yet it happens all the time.
10. Not asking for a grant. There never is a perfect time to ask for a grant. The economy is down. You're too busy to finish the proposal by the deadline. You worry the funder has never heard of you. Excuses are easy to come by, but you'll never get a grant if you don't try. So what are you waiting for? Start researching and writing now!

Avoiding these ten mistakes will put your grant right at the top of the list for lenders. Good luck!

To read more please visit: <http://bit.ly/Pr1zpz>

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(Call for Proposals) Project Inspire 2014: Grants to Inspire the Young People for Empowerment

The Singapore Committee for UN Women and the MasterCard Initiative are accepting applications for the 'Project Inspire: 5 Minutes to Change the World'. This is a grant opportunity that invites youths between 18-35 years around the world to submit their project ideas. The participants can be from NGOs, and social businesses, benefiting women and girls in Asia, the Middle East or Africa.

Each participant gets five-minutes time to present the inspiring story. This is an opportunity to win **US\$25,000**. Project Inspire aims to inspire young people across the world to take action to empower disadvantaged women and girls in Asia/Pacific, the Middle East or Africa through entrepreneurship and business literacy.

#### Eligibility Criteria:

- Entrant can be from anywhere in the world without restriction of nationality.
- Entrant must be youth between the ages 18-35 at the time of submitting entry.
- Entrant must be from non-profit and non-governmental organizations, and social businesses.
- The project must show creativity and demonstrate the potential to make a sustainable impact on the empowerment of women.
- The project must be designed to empower disadvantaged women and girls through entrepreneurship and business literacy.
- The project must be based on an existing initiative.
- The beneficiaries of the project must be women or girls in Asia/Pacific, Middle East or Africa.
- Project can be submitted as an individual or a team of up to three. The team leader must be between the ages 18-35 and must commit to travel to Singapore and be present during the whole duration if chosen as finalist.
- The proposed project must not propagate any political views or religious doctrines.
- The project must be designed to be implemented with a budget of US\$25,000.
- The entrant must commit to commence the fieldwork for their project by 1 February 2015.

#### How to Apply:

Submit an Application form, and a (maximum) 5-minute video.

The application form demands the answers to:

- What is the inspirational idea?
- How will the project change the lives of women and girls in the short and long term?
- How the entrant and her/his team will carry out the project?
- How the US\$25,000 will be spent to carry out the project?
- How will the success of the project be measured?

Applications must be submitted by **June 30, 2014**. To apply, go to: <http://bit.ly/PnKZqL>

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#### (Call for Proposals) Child Health Foundation: Innovative Small Grants Program

Child Health Foundation wishes to receive proposals from interested health workers, investigators, or community organizations for innovative research or innovative service projects directed at improving the health of infants, children, and pregnant women. Proposals may be submitted by individuals (with organizational support) or groups.

Areas of priority include: development of sustainable biomedical and social technologies; and adaptation and implementation of technologies in local situations that may have widespread applications.

Projects that involve only general medical care of children but without innovative aspects will not be considered. To see a summary of projects Child Health Foundation has funded, see our website.

The projects should be for no more than one year and should be able to document measurable results. The projects may address child health issues in a developing country or in the United States. Budgets should not exceed **US\$5,000**. The projects will be reviewed by the Program Committee of the Child Health Foundation. Outside reviewers will be used if necessary. The number of projects approved depends on the amount of funding available.

Deadline for Letter of Intent in **2014 is April 30th**; The 2014 Deadline for the Proposal is August 31st.

For more information go to: <http://bit.ly/1sdcJgY>

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As part of the Firelight Foundation's Capacity Building Program, Firelight provides "Newsflashes" to share relevant resources and information with our active grantee-partners via weekly emails and via post on a monthly basis. We hope that by facilitating access to information for grassroots, community-focused organizations, programming for children and families, as well as organizational development, is enhanced. Past editions of the Firelight Newsflash can be found on our website:

<http://www.firelightfoundation.org/resources/newsflash>

We welcome your comments, feedback and ideas for upcoming Newsflashes at [newsletter@firelightfoundation.org](mailto:newsletter@firelightfoundation.org)

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