



Follow this sample timeline for grant-seeking success

I've been asked if there is a timeline I use to help structure and streamline the grant-writing process. Here is a sample timeline I follow that would cover a three-month period before the deadline. You can use this sample timeline to develop your own schedule based on the deadline and the amount of time you have available to put your own proposal together.

As you write more proposals, many of these steps will become automatic, and you will develop a sense for the amount of time you'll need to complete the process. If you are new to the grant-writing process, I would highly recommend allotting more time than you think you might need.

Step 1: Three months before the deadline

- Read the request for proposals (RFP) or giving guidelines carefully and make note of the eligibility and proposal requirements. If collaborative partners are needed, contact and meet with them to discuss your project idea and to determine their interest in participating.
 - Meet with all staff who will be a part of the project and the proposal-writing process, and determine a regular meeting schedule for the next three months.
 - Attend the RFP workshop if one is scheduled, or contact the program officer to discuss your project briefly.
 - Determine whether there is sufficient data to substantiate the need for your project. If there isn't, determine what needs to be collected and start developing and distributing surveys, interviewing stakeholders, or conducting research to substantiate the need.
 - Begin the process of designing and refining your project idea based on its goal(s) and objectives. Discuss staff requirements for the project, as well as training requirements and equipment needs, if applicable.
 - Decide whether you will use an external evaluator. If so, contact this individual to discuss your project and to confirm his or her participation.

Step 2: Two months before the deadline

- Continue developing your project, filling in specific details such as the activities to be carried out and a timeline for completion.



- Develop a budget based on the methodology of your project. Secure cost estimates if needed. Determine whether in-kind contributions will be supplied by partners. Review the allowable indirect-cost rate published in the RFP.
- Design an evaluation plan based on the project's goal(s) and objectives.
- Ask partners for letters of commitment and provide sample verbiage if needed.

Step 3: One month before the deadline

- Review the proposal format requirements and type the first draft of your proposal. Spell-check and grammar-check your proposal's narrative. Give the draft to staff and partners for their review and input. Develop and review additional drafts as needed until the final draft is approved.
- Make sure all letters of commitment have been received and contain complete information.
- Review the narrative requirements and make sure each section provides the required information.

Step 4: One week before the deadline

- Develop the table of contents for your proposal.
- Spell-check and grammar-check your proposal narrative again.
- Submit the budget to your business office for review. Double-check all budget numbers. Compare the budget to your narrative, and make sure all items listed in the budget correspond to activities discussed in the narrative.
- Assemble your proposal and include required attachments in the appendix.
- Submit your proposal.

Following such a timeline is sure to put you on the path to success. Best of luck!