Writing a Funding Proposal

OVERVIEW

Brief description

This toolkit deals with planning and researching a funding proposal before you write it; how to write the proposal; and the follow-up required once it is written and sent off. There is also an example of a funding proposal to guide you. You will find advice on what you need to know about donors, and what you need to know about your own project or organisation before you write a funding proposal. You will also find guidelines on what to put into your proposal and how to write it, and references to other CIVICUS toolkits that can help you.

Why have a toolkit?

The toolkit is here to help you produce effective funding proposals. If you use it on its own, you should be able to produce a useful funding proposal to request support for your project and your organisation. If you use it together with with other CIVICUS toolkits, as indicated, you will increase the capacity of your organisation to plan and raise money effectively.

Who should use the toolkit?

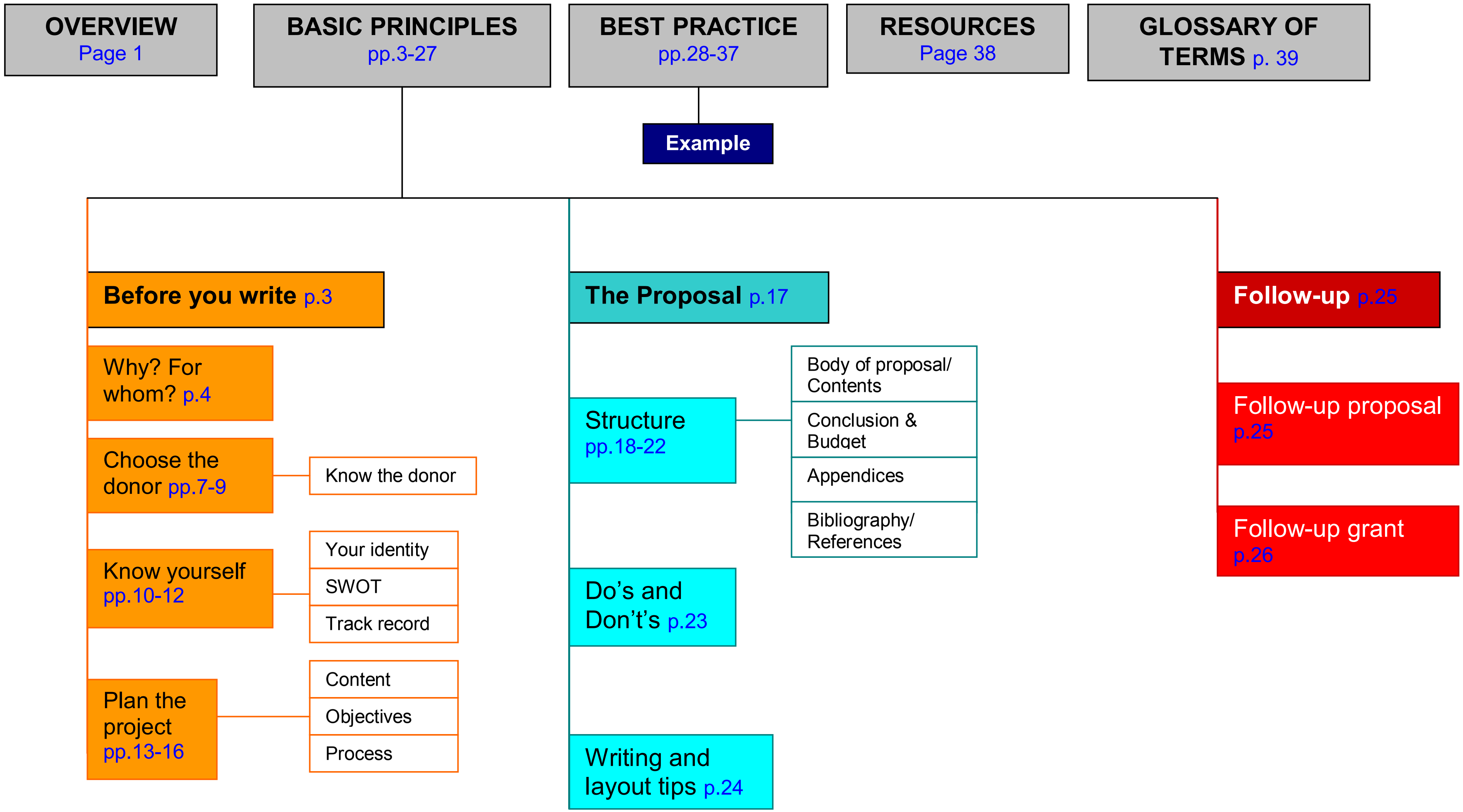
This toolkit is aimed specifically at those who do not feel confident about writing funding proposals and who may not have much experience in it. It can be used by the individual project manager or by a team committed to increasing the organisation's capacity to raise money. Often the best funding proposals are written by small teams. Even when a proposal is written by only one person, she or he needs to seek the opinions of others in the team about the proposal and make adjustments accordingly.

When will this toolkit be useful?

- When you have an organisational financing strategy which includes raising money from donors (see the toolkit on Developing a Financing Strategy).
- When you have a project idea for which you need donor funding.
- When a donor asks you to present a funding proposal for a project.

The site map on the next page will help you find your way around this toolkit.

Writing a Funding Proposal



BASIC PRINCIPLES

Before you write

The best advice we can give you is:

Don't start writing a funding proposal before you have done the necessary research, thinking and planning!

Why do you think this is so?

The funding proposal forms the basis of your relationship with a donor. If the donor can see that it is hastily written, without careful thought and planning, the relationship may be a very short one! Rather give the impression, based on fact, that you are thorough, careful and committed to doing a good job, right from the start.

In this section of the toolkit we deal with the tools you need before you begin writing the proposal.

If possible, you need to begin preparing at least a month before you want to submit a funding proposal. As you will see, there is a lot to do and you need time to do it properly.

Before you begin writing, you need to:

- Be clear about why and for whom you are writing the proposal.
- Understand the donor for whom you are preparing it (See the sections on Choose the Donor and Know the Donor).
- Know yourself, which means being clear about your identity, knowing your strengths and weaknesses (look at the section on the SWOT Analysis), and being able to present a credible track record in areas such as financial management, project impact, technical competence and general management ability.
- Finally, you need to plan the project, which means understanding the context, setting objectives, and designing a process.

All these areas are dealt with in the pages that follow.

Why? For whom?

The first question you need to ask yourself is: *Why are you writing a funding proposal?*

The simple answer to this is:
You write a funding proposal to persuade someone to give your organisation or project money. The chief purpose of a funding proposal is persuasion, NOT description. So, while you will need to describe the proposed project, you need to do so in a way that will convince a donor to give you money.

There are several reasons why you may have decided that the best route to go in raising money for your project is through "selling" it to a donor. These might include:

- Large sums of money are needed;
- You have decided that it is important to "diversify" your funding base – to have more than one or a few donors who support your organisation;
- The proposed project fits within a broader framework of regional or national development in which a number of donors are already involved.

Before you go ahead, be sure that requesting funds from a donor is a good route to go for this particular project. Alternatives include:

- Raising money from the community which will benefit;
- Using money which the organisation has generated itself through investment or earned income.

(For more on alternatives to fundraising, you should look at the toolkit on Developing A Financing Strategy.)

Who are you writing the proposal for?

There are two levels at which this question can be answered:

- "Who" meaning what kind of funding agency do you have in mind?
- "Who" meaning what sort of person is likely to read it?

Different kinds of funding agencies:

(Further on in the toolkit you will find a table of types of agencies and the advantages and disadvantages of each type.)

Why is it helpful to think about the different kinds of funding agencies?

Because you will be able to match the project you have in mind to the interests and concerns of each agency, and the amounts of money that each agency is likely to have available. You will also be able to anticipate some of the problems that may occur.

If you do not have much experience, it can be useful to speak to other civil society organisations about their experiences with different kinds of agencies.

Type of agency	Advantages	Disadvantages
Government	▪ Often have a lot of money. ▪ May be useful on issues of policy, access etc. ▪ If project fits government strategy, this increases possibility of meaningful impact.	▪ Process of application is often bureaucratic and takes a long time. ▪ Payment is often delayed and there is very little flexibility. ▪ Application requirements can be complex.
Churches	▪ Often share the development and ethical agenda of progressive civil society organisations. ▪ Usually have quite a lot of flexibility in what and how they fund.	▪ Usually rely on own constituency to raise money and this means that funds may be limited and/or subject to fluctuations. ▪ Sometimes get allocations from governments and are subject to changes in government policy.
Large family foundations	▪ Have large sums of money to give. ▪ Staff are professional, understand the issues and civil society concerns. ▪ Clear guidelines on what is funded and the process for getting funding usually provided. ▪ Willing to share international experience.	▪ Process for application can be lengthy. ▪ Requirements for applications can be complex. ▪ Priorities may change.
Small family foundations	▪ Often form close relationships and have a personal commitment to an organisation. ▪ More flexible on format and process. ▪ More flexible on what they fund.	▪ Staff not always as professional as that of bigger foundations. ▪ May not have much money. ▪ Personal contacts very important (can also be an advantage).
Major corporate funding	▪ Have large sums of money to give. ▪ Often have professional, accessible staff. ▪ Usually clear on what they want from the arrangement. Not a hidden agenda.	▪ Change priorities quite often. ▪ Sometimes want direct representation on the board. ▪ Often very sensitive to anything that might alienate other stakeholders.
Small corporate funding	▪ Informal approach. ▪ Interested in local projects. ▪ Personal connections very helpful. ▪ Agenda usually clear.	▪ Not that much money. ▪ Interests limited. ▪ If no personal connections, no funding!

Who is likely to read your proposal?

Remember what we have already said - that you are writing the proposal to *persuade* someone to give you money for your project.

But who is the 'someone'?

Usually, there are two kinds of people who could read your proposal:

- The decision-maker who will make the final decision, based on your proposal. Sometimes there may be more than one decision-maker, with someone at a project officer level making the initial decision to support the proposal and someone at a more senior level, or a committee, making the final decision.
- A technical expert who will assess the technical competence of the proposal and write a report to the decision-maker(s) but not make the decision.

This should tell you that your proposal must be:

- persuasive; and
- technically detailed and correct.

In the section dealing with The Proposal, we suggest that, in order to keep the body of the proposal a reasonable length, you include the technical detail as one of the appendices.

Choose the donor

We have already discussed the different kinds of donors (in the sections Why? and For Whom?). If you are interested in local donors, you need to do some research to find out who in your area gives money to the kind of project you are "selling".

To make an informed choice about the right donors to send your proposal to, you need to know something about the possible donors. Different donors have different interests. Approaching the wrong donor with a request wastes both their time and your time.

In order to prepare a good proposal, a proposal that gets the results you want, you need to know even more.

Know the donor

There are two aspects to what you need to know about a donor:

- You need an understanding of what the donor wants in terms of goals, mission, concerns; and
- You need to know the practical details of format, timing etc.

Remember that writing a funding proposal is a "selling" process. As anyone in the retail business will tell you, when you sell something, you need to know what the prospective buyer wants. Donors are "buyers" and they have an agenda and are entitled to have an agenda.

What do donors want?

Most donors want a range of things. These include:

- To make an impact or a difference – they want their money to count, they want the work they fund to be successful, they want to be seen to be successful.
- To acquire knowledge, understanding, information.
- To share knowledge, understanding, information, and, in so doing, add value to their chosen interventions.
- To increase their influence in addressing what they consider to be the problems of the world, the region, the country, or a particular area.

What does this mean for you when you are preparing to write a proposal?

It means firstly, and very importantly, that your overall agenda cannot be too different from that of the donor. If your organisation supports the legalisation of abortion, it does not make sense to send a funding proposal to a pro-life church donor.

It also means that your proposal must convince the donor that supporting your project is likely to lead to a successful intervention, one it can be proud to claim involvement with, and one the donor, and those the donor wants to influence, will identify with. People identify with people. This means that, when you write your proposal, it must have a human quality. It should not just be a dry summary.

Most donors will also want to feel that they can add value by sharing what they have learned from other projects and interventions with which they have been involved. To a greater or lesser extent, this means that they will "specialise" and will want to fund projects that fit within their specialisation.

The more you know about a donor, the more you will be able to choose the donors who are right for you, and the more you will be able to present your proposal in a way that makes the donor want to "buy" it, or buy into it.

The packaging

Whatever the donor wants, it wants it well-packaged. This means getting the presentation right as well. Once you have decided that your goals and concerns fit those of the donor, then you need to know what the donor wants in terms of packaging. This includes knowing what format it wants its proposals in, what details it wants included, whether it uses a special planning format, such as logframe analysis (see Glossary of Terms), how long it expects proposals to be and so on.

In summary, this is what you need to find out about a donor:

- Name, address, telephone and fax numbers, e-mail address, name and title of the person you should make contact with. This is the preliminary information which you can get from the switchboard, from the donor's web page, from a directory, or from your colleagues in civil society organisations.

- The goals, mission and concern of the donor, including its areas of interest, whether it funds in particular geographical areas only, what its general funding criteria are, what else it funds. You can get this kind of information from a web page or from a brochure or annual report, as well as from your colleagues in civil society organisations.

- What size of grant the donor usually gives.

- What the donor's decision-making process is and how long it is likely to take for a decision to be made once you submit a written proposal.

- The dates when proposals are considered and the dates/deadlines for submission of proposals for consideration.

- Whether the donor has a special proposal format you should use, or guidelines you should follow, or whether you can use your own. Some donors may want a short preliminary proposal before asking you to complete a full proposal. This enables them to make an initial judgement about whether or not they want to get involved in more detailed negotiations with you.

All this information is best obtained from the appropriate desk officer or project officer. You need a name, a person to whom you can speak, either by telephone or in a preliminary meeting. This initial contact is very important. It can set the tone for the whole relationship.

The personal contact
It is always important to remember that "the donor" is represented by people – the desk officer, the project officer, the regional CEO – these are people with concerns, interests, and enormous demands on their attention and time.

What does this mean for you?

It means that:

- You must communicate professionally with the donor representatives. Do so with purpose and do not waste their time.
- You must be honest and open when you communicate. Be prepared to listen and to share information and ideas.
- You must project the human side of your work so that the donor is able to identify with people at a human level.

In summary, then, the time sequence is:

- Make some general inquiries about appropriate donors.
- Follow up by making contact with a project or desk officer.
- Begin work on the planning stage of your proposal.

However, there is one important aspect we have not yet dealt with and which you need to address even before you make the initial contact with the desk or project officer. You need to be sure that you know yourself. That is what we deal with in the next section.

Why do you think it is important to know yourself and to be confident that you can project a good image of your organisation before you speak to the project or desk officer?

Because the buyer has to believe in the salesperson!

Know Yourself

What does it mean to "know yourself" before you write a funding proposal?

It means that you cannot hope to "sell" or promote a project if you do not know, and cannot present, a picture of your organisation as a "good risk"

Many organisations and projects make requests for money from donors. The donors' business is, in a way, giving away money, or put differently, investing in development or aid of some sort. When a donor makes this kind of investment, it looks for a "good risk", a project or organisation that is likely to make a difference, and to sustain an intervention.

Knowing yourself in such a way that you can project a credible picture to possible donors is not something that happens overnight. It is an ongoing part of building your organisational capacity.

When you sit down to write your funding proposal, you already need to know, and have written down:

- Who you are, what your identity is.
- What your strengths and weaknesses are, and what opportunities and threats confront you (you need, in other words, to have done a SWOT Analysis, and this is a format to help you with this on the best page).
- Your track record (what you have achieved and what you can show from past work that will give a donor confidence that you are a "good risk."

All these areas are dealt with in the next section of the toolkit.

Organisational identity

To present your organisational identity, you need:

- An overall mission and goal for the organisation – why it exists, who it is intended to benefit, how it is linked to the intended beneficiary community and what it is committed to achieving through its work. (There is more on this in the toolkits on Planning).
- It is useful if the organisation also has a *visible* and *recognisable* identity in the form of a logo, but this is not essential.
- A council or board that provides the organisation with a credible governance structure. This means that you need a short biography of each person, reflecting, for example, such factors as experience, community links, gender and an appropriate racial mix. Some organisations also have *patrons.* These are usually highly respected and well-known people who, although they do not have the time to be involved in the regular governance of the organisation, are willing to lend their support and name to the cause and the organisation.
- Key staff or volunteers who are in place to make the organisation and, therefore, the project, work. Here too you want to present brief biographies of the people who will be central in the project, showing why they are appropriate.

In summary, you need to present yourself as a sound, accountable organisation, competent to achieve its objectives.

Doing a SWOT Analysis

A SWOT Analysis is a simple planning tool that will help you to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your organisation, as well as the opportunities and threats facing it. Having done this, when you write your funding proposal you will be able to show how you will build on your strengths, address your weaknesses, use the opportunities and confront the threats, through the proposed project. In this way, you will show the possible donor that you have a realistic and accurate picture of the organisation, and that you have the insight and determination to build its capacity to ensure that the project will be sustainable.

Remember that strengths and weaknesses refer to *internal factors* while opportunities and threats refer to *external factors*. So, for example:

A strength might be:	Experienced and committed staff
A weakness might be:	Insufficient technological skills among the staff
An opportunity might be:	Government policy supportive of the kind of work the organisation does
A threat might be:	Current donors have changed their focus

It can be helpful to do a table that looks like this:

Strengths	**Weaknesses**
Opportunities	**Threats**

Working through these issues with your staff will also give them the confidence to promote the organisation and project.

Know and record your track record

Remember that, if a donor decides to support your project, it is taking a risk, so you must be able to present evidence to show that it is a "good risk."

The following are common areas in which you should be able to present such evidence:
- Previous results and impact.
- Good management competence with regard to projects and people.
- Good financial management skills and skills in drawing up a financing strategy.
- Technical competence in your particular field.

(For more on financial management skills see the toolkit on Financial Control and Accountability. For more on a financing strategy see the toolkit on Developing a Financing Strategy.)

Where will this evidence come from and where will it be recorded?

The organisation's annual report is a useful place to find this information recorded. Usually it will include details of projects that have happened or been happening during the year, details of the board members and staff, and some feedback on impact in relation to plans. For the financial information, a copy of the most recent audited financial statements is useful. These documents can be included as appendices. More specific details can be included in the proposal.

If your organisation is new, it will be a bit more difficult to show that you are worth a risk. Nevertheless, you can do so by:

- Enlisting the written support of credible governance members and patrons.
- Getting a letter from credible accountants to say that you have set up a good financial management system, with appropriate checks and balances.
- Providing information about staff members and/or volunteers which reflect their track records on similar projects.

In summary, before you even get to the project details, the donor will want to know the following from you:

- Your name and position in the organisation or project.
- The name and contact details of the organisation.
- What community you serve and what your links to the community are.
- The mission, goals and strategy of the organisation.
- What your governance structures are and who is on them.
- The level of expertise of the staff and/or volunteers involved.
- Your particular strengths as an organisation in the context within which you function.
- Your track record in terms of impact, competence, project and financial management.

There is still one more very important thing you need to do before you are ready to write your proposal – you need to plan the project in detail. This is dealt with in the next section of the toolkit.

Plan the Project

The initial step when you plan a project is to make a strong link between your organisational mission and strategy and the specific project. It is a serious mistake to take as your starting point: "What can we get money for?"

An organisation is a response to a problem or an opportunity in the environment. It is from this that the mission and strategy of the organisation flow. It is this that a strategic planning process should address. The projects you plan and request funding for should be part of your strategy, not just a way to raise money. Your plan must reflect:

- Your understanding of the context and how this is reflected in the organisation's mission and strategy;
- The specific circumstances in the context that create the problem the project is meant to address and what that problem is;
- The objectives of the project;
- The process intended to achieve the objectives.

(For more detail on this, see the toolkits on Overview of Planning, Strategic Planning and Action Planning.)

Know the context

Why is it important to present the context?

Donors have very many demands on their resources. They have to decide where best to use them, in terms of geographical area, region, problem issue or challenge. This means that you need to contextualise your project in such a way that you show that the problem or opportunity being addressed fit the donor concerns, that tackling the problem or using the opportunity in the area or areas defined in the project is important, and that the potential learnings are significant.

Some of the more common things that you need to know about the context, depending on the project or proposal:

- Country, region, area details (location in region, government, population etc);
- Poverty information, including information on the state of the economy, employment/unemployment;
- Gender issues;
- HIV/AIDS situation;
- Health and education.

If your organisation deals with a specific field, you may want to include some other information, such as, for example, the number of people with access to telephones.

So, let's say your broad project aim is:

> There will be an increase in the standard of living of all rural people in XYZ by the year 2005 as a result of better agricultural practices.

What information do you think would be useful for the donor to know about the context?

You might want to include information comparing the standard of living in urban and rural areas, or information about the most common agricultural practices currently in use and why they are not working, or what kind of public-private partnerships exist.

Remember that you are not writing a thesis. Your intention is to give useful information that will be interesting background to the reader, but will not overwhelm him or her with unnecessary detail. Where necessary, you will need to quote the sources of your information so remember to note them down when you are doing your preparation and the necessary research.

By the time you make your initial contact with a donor, you should be well-informed about the context of your project.

You should also be clear about the objectives of your project. This is dealt with in the next section and in detail in the toolkit on Strategic Planning.

Objectives

At this stage, you need to define the objectives of your project clearly so that you know exactly what you intend to achieve. A good objective usually states:

- What you want to achieve (your ends);
- How you want to achieve it. (your means); and
- Who the main beneficiaries will be.

By "main beneficiaries" we mean the "end beneficiaries". So, in a project that aims to improve the situation of prisoners in a country's prisons by training warders, the end beneficiaries are the prisoners and not the warders.

But look at the two examples of objectives that follow:

1. There is an increase in the standard of living of all rural people in XYZ by the year 2005 as a result of better agricultural practices.
2. Women heads-of-household living in the ABC region of XYZ improve their standard of living by the end of 2003 through the development of appropriate agricultural skills to enable them to do commercially viable and ecologically sustainable farming.

What is the difference between these two objectives?

Can you see that one is very broad and one is very specific?

Objective 1 is a general or overall objective (also sometimes called a "goal").
Objective 2 is a specific objective (also sometimes called a "project purpose").

All projects need both kinds of objectives.

It is useful to know what terminology is used by the donor for whom you are writing the proposal, so that you use the same terms that the donor uses. You can find out what terms the donor uses by reading the information it puts out about applications for funding, or by asking the project or desk officer, or by going into their website.

Donors who expect you to use a logical framework analysis in your application may have a special way in which they want the objectives expressed. You will find more about LFA in the Glossary of Terms and in the toolkit on Overview of Planning.

About the general objective

The general objective states the overall development or aid aim towards which your more specific project purpose should contribute. Important things to remember about the general objective or goal are:

- You cannot achieve the general objective or goal on your own as a project or organisation. Your project will make a contribution towards achieving it.
- The general objective or goal provides a benchmark against which the success of your project and that of others with a similar purpose can be measured.
- The general objective or goal must be compatible with your organisation's mission statement and with the mission of the donor to whom you are applying for funds.
- It will usually take longer to achieve the general objective or goal than to achieve the specific project purpose.

About the specific objective

The project purpose or specific objective is usually something that your project should be able to achieve through its work. It is a result that should be possible in the time specified, and it is the strategy the organisation and the project believe will address a particular problem in a particular area, making a contribution to achieving the general objective or goal. A project may have more than one specific purpose but it is best to focus, in your proposal, on the most important one. Some important things to remember about the project purpose or specific objective:

- The more specific the project purpose is, the easier it will be to design a process for achieving it.
- Try to include specific targets e.g. how many women heads of household will improve their standard of living and by how much? In doing this you are including indicators against which to measure your progress. (See Glossary of Terms for an explanation of indicators.)
- The achievement of the project purpose is the result by which the project will be judged so it must be possible to achieve it. Do not promise the impossible by over-estimating your skills or capacity.

Why do you think it is important to be clear about your objectives before you write your funding proposal?

Your objectives tell the donor immediately:

- Whether or not the project fits within its priorities;
- How clear you are about what you are trying to achieve;
- Whether or not you are realistic and, if so, whether or not the project is likely to have a useful impact.

In summary:

- The objectives help you to clarify your goal and your strategy for contributing to that goal.
- The objectives provide a framework for the design of the project process.
- The objectives provide a "reality check" so that the donor is able to see how possible success is.
- The objectives link the project to the mission and goals of the organisation and to the mission of the proposed donor.
- The overall objective provides a long-term, accumulative goal.
- The project purpose provides a shorter-term, immediate objective.

With the objectives clarified, the next step is the design of the project process.

Process

Designing the process means planning how you are going to achieve the project purpose.

The process is the step-by-step journey that will take you to the achievement of your project purpose. Designing the process means answering questions such as:

- What will you do? (Actions)
- Where will you do this?
- How will you do it?
- Who will be involved?
- What outputs (see Glossary of Terms) will there be?
- When will the various activities and outputs happen?
- How will progress be monitored? (See the toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation)
- How will the project be evaluated? (See the toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation)
- What resources will be needed to carry out the activities? (See the toolkit on Budgeting.)

You need to be able to answer these questions before you begin writing the proposal.

We have now come to the end of the section dealing with what needs to be done before you write the proposal.

Why do you think it is necessary to do all this before you write the proposal?

The more you have thought through who you are writing for, who you are and what you want to achieve and do, the better your proposal will be. Your proposal is more likely to be coherent, logical, appropriate and successful.

You are now ready to continue with the section on the actual proposal.

The Proposal

Structure

We have come now to the actual proposal. In this section of the toolkit we deal with the following:

- The contents and summary which go at the beginning of the proposal.
- Writing the body of the proposal, including the detailed content.
- Writing the conclusions and budget.
- Deciding what appendices to attach.

If you have done all the preliminary work, this part of the proposal writing should go well. The proposal is a very important document, for several reasons.

Why is the proposal document so important?

Clearly, one of the reasons is that this is the document which will form the basis of the decision by the donor about whether to fund the project or not. But there is another reason that you should keep in mind. Once the proposal is written and has been accepted by the donor, it becomes the framework of the project, the place in which the project cycle is defined, and the basis on which the success or failure of the project will be assessed. In writing the proposal, you commit yourself to a project with particular goals and objectives, and with a particular shape and process.

How you write the proposal will depend, to some extent, on the requirements of the donor. Possibilities include:

- A one-page document, summarising what you hope to achieve and how, as a preliminary step for the donor, to decide whether it is interested in getting more information or not. Here you would focus on objectives and a summary of the envisaged process.
- A standard format established by the donor. This would cover much the same areas as those we have already discussed, as well as those discussed in this section. You would need to fit what you have to say under the set headings.
- A standard form into which details need to be fitted. This is far more restricting than a standard format, but it should still be possible to show your thinking and planning to your advantage.
- Your own format. This will enable you to present your planning and thinking to the best advantage. Perhaps surprisingly, this is probably the most difficult kind of proposal for you to write. It is up to you to decide what to say, how to say it, in what order to say it, how long to take to say it and so on. In this section, we focus on this kind of proposal to help you structure and write your own proposal as well as possible.

On the next page, we present a suggested outline for a proposal. Later in the section, we give you more ideas about how to "fill in" the structure when you write it.

POSSIBLE STRUCTURE OF A FUNDING PROPOSAL

Section	Content	Comments
Title page	▪ Title of proposal. ▪ Name of agency to whom proposal is being submitted. ▪ Name and address of your organisation, if possible with a logo. ▪ Name of the contact person who will best be able to discuss the proposal. ▪ Date.	The title should capture the essence of the project in a short phrase or sentence. It should not be very long.
Summary page	Summary of the proposal – about 300 words in length.	Capture the essence of the project by briefly stating: ▪ what the current context or situation is ▪ what your organisation feels would be a way of addressing the problems using its expertise ▪ why this is a good way to go ▪ what impact will be achieved ▪ who the main beneficiaries will be ▪ the time period envisaged ▪ the overall cost.
Contents page	List the main headings and page numbers.	This will help the reader find his/her way around the proposal.
Proposal – body of the proposal	▪ Context (about a page) ▪ Specific/relevant opportunities and/or problems for organisation and for donor (about half a page) ▪ Objectives (about half a page - including clarification of the beneficiaries) ▪ Intended process (about three or four pages)	▪ Describe the context briefly, giving relevant figures ▪ Explain how you identified the problem or opportunity of particular concern to you ▪ State what qualifies your organisation to address such issues ▪ State the general and specific objectives of the project ▪ Summarise the intended process. You can refer to the appendices for more detail. If there is a gender-specific element, highlight it. If there are risks involved in the project, mention briefly how you will address them, and what degree of flexibility will be needed from the donor side. Discuss sustainability of the project and/or impact.
Conclusions and budgeting	State briefly what you are requesting from the agency and why. Include a brief budget summary.	The detailed budget should be in the appendices. Here just give main budget items and totals over the whole project period. This is also a good place to summarise your financing plan for the project e.g. who else are you asking for money from?
Appendices	Detailed technical description of project, methods, timetable, detailed budget, annual report, audited financial statements, and so on.	This is where you can put detail without making the body of the proposal too long. If you plan using LFA, this is where you would put the matrix. (See Glossary of Terms and the toolkit on Overview of Planning.)
Bibliography /references	List any references you have used, in the order in which you mention them in the text.	Mostly list sources which the donor will recognise as credible e.g. United Nations Development Programme documents.

Body of proposal – content

The body of your proposal is where you do your main "selling job". It is here that you persuade the donor that your project is necessary and worthwhile.

The key areas that you need to cover here (and you will already have done the preparatory work) are:

- Context (about a page);
- Specific/relevant opportunities and/or problems for the organisation and for the donor (about half a page);
- Objectives (about half a page) including clarification of the beneficiaries;
- Intended process (about three or four pages).

One way to remember this is through the acronym CROP:

C	=	Context
R	=	Relevance (of the context for you and the donor)
O	=	Objectives
P	=	Process.

How can CROP help you?

It can help you by ensuring that you cover the four main areas that need to form the body of your proposal.

- You have already looked at the context of the project. It is important here to locate the project in a local, regional, and if appropriate, international context. The donor will be interested to know whether the project has any implications at these different levels. So, for example, a project aimed at creating community care for AIDS orphans in a slum area of a major city could generate important learnings internationally. If the donor is supporting HIV/AIDS projects elsewhere, this might well be a "selling point". Here is one place where knowing something about the donor may help you to decide what to emphasise.

- It is not enough simply to state the context. You need to make the links between the context, the focus and track record of your organisation, as well as to the mission of the donor. In other words, you need to answer the question: So what? in relation to the context. Yes, the incidence of HIV/AIDS is higher in sub-Saharan Africa than anywhere else; yes, the number of AIDS orphans has grown to crisis proportions; but why is that relevant to the organisation and why is it relevant to the donor?

- The objectives are your upfront statement of what you expect the project to achieve, and what the impact of the project will be. If well-written, they should also clarify for the donor what your main strategy is and who the main beneficiaries of the project will be. This is also a good place to mention the potential impact in terms of replicability (see Glossary of Terms) and sustainability (See Glossary of Terms). Here it is useful to show that you have already thought about how your organisation will withdraw from the project in a way that enables benefits to be retained.

- We have already talked about process. In your proposal you will probably need to present your process design in two ways:

    - A detailed plan, giving technical processes, specific activities, specific timelines, outputs for each step, resources needed for each step. This would be included as an appendix.
    - A summary, giving main types of activities (e.g. running workshops, sinking wells), significant outputs (e.g. drop-in shelters for AIDS orphans, posters on how to purify water), types of resources (e.g. additional staff trained in youth work, engineering consultants). This would be included in the body of the report.

Why is it necessary to have a detailed plan and a summary?

The summary serves to create interest for the reader without getting him or her bogged down in detail. The summary is for the decision-maker and the appendix for the technical advisor.

Before we move on to the conclusions and budget, just remind yourself again what CROP stands for:

C	=	Context
R	=	Relevance (of the context for you and the donor)
O	=	Objectives
P	=	Process.

<u>Conclusion and budgeting</u>

Why is this section needed?

You need to draw the thinking of the reader together in response to what you are saying and asking. The conclusion will help you to do that, and, by including a budget summary, you give the reader a clear idea of the scale and substance of your request.

Your conclusion should, therefore, draw your arguments together and summarise briefly (half a page) and without repetition:

- Why the project is necessary;
- Why yours is the right organisation to undertake the project;
- Why the donor should consider the proposal, from its own point of view;
- What could be achieved.

Budgeting requires a toolkit of its own. Please refer to the toolkit in this series. There are, however, some general points to make about the budget and budget summary:

- Be specific. State up-front what you would like the donor to fund, whether the whole project or just a part of it.
- Be realistic. If you have done your homework properly you will have some idea of the usual size of grants from this donor for this kind of work.

- Do not itemise line details in the body of the proposal. Rather focus on totals per year, and per broader category e.g. capacity building rather than each training workshop.
- Provide a picture of your financing strategy for the project e.g. who else you are approaching, whether any money or support has already been offered and if so, how much and in what form. If the intention is to raise any of the money from the intended beneficiaries, explain the reasoning behind this, and the mechanisms that will be put in place to facilitate it.
- Address the cost-benefit issue, justifying the cost in terms of the benefits.

The detailed budget will be included as one of the appendices. In the next section we talk more about these.

Appendices

Why do you need to include appendices?

By now you should know the answer to this question. The appendices enable you to keep the body of the proposal a reasonable length while ensuring that the interested and questioning reader can get more details. It is also where you can include additional documents which provide necessary information without having to rewrite large parts of such documents.

Some ideas for useful appendices include:

- the Annual Report
- the LFA matrix (see Glossary of Terms and toolkit on Overview of Planning)
- the detailed budget (see the toolkit on Budgeting)
- the most recent audited statements
- photographs illustrating context and/or the project
- detailed technical description of the project
- a detailed timeline (see the toolkit on Action Planning)
- relevant evaluation reports
- additional information about the people involved where there is not enough in the Annual Report

Number your appendices so that they are easy to access. List them on the contents page.

Finally, include a brief section on bibliography/references. This is dealt with in the next section.

Bibliography/references

This should be a very short section. Keep in mind that you are not writing a thesis or a book.

So, why include this section at all?

The main reason is to make sure that facts you have provided are backed up with credible sources.

Do not worry about whether the format you use for your references meets academic requirements or not. You should focus on being

- clear; and
- consistent.

Include:

- Name of author(s) and/or name of organisation producing the publication;
- Name of the publication;
- Date of the publication;
- Publisher.

Your intention should be that the donor can make use of the reference if necessary.

In summary, then, the proposal consists of the following parts:

- Contents page for easy access to specific sections
- Summary page to let the donor representative know what to expect
- Body or content of the proposal, structured as CROP (see Glossary of Terms)
- Conclusion and budget summary
- Appendices to provide necessary detail
- Bibliography/references to back up facts.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Now you know what to put into the proposal. But sometimes the how is as important as the what. In this section we look at some of the do's and don't of how you write your funding proposal.

Do	Don't
▪ Make contact with a "real" person and then address the proposal to him or her. ▪ Plan ahead so that your proposal isn't rushed or crisis-related. ▪ Show that you know who else is working in the field and what they are doing. ▪ Involve others in editing the proposal. ▪ Explain acronyms. ▪ Keep it short – not more than 10 pages for the body of the proposal and less if possible. ▪ Show that you care about the work – show some passion. ▪ Pitch the tone correctly – be human rather than academic, let the human story come through, but don't go overboard on emotion.	▪ Take a "one proposal fits all" approach – if you have done your homework on the funding agency, use what you know to make the proposal fit the agency. ▪ "Pad" your budget to include things that are not relevant to the project. ▪ Hide information the donor is entitled to. ▪ Send so much documentation that the reader gives up before he or she begins. ▪ Assume that the donor knows all about you so you don't need to bother to present yourself well. ▪ Use unnecessary jargon. ▪ Make the project fit the donor criteria at the expense of what you think needs to be done.

Finally, write concisely and clearly and simply and make your proposal look readable. You will find some writing tips and some layout tips in the next section. (See also the toolkit on Writing Effectively)

Writing and layout tips

Writing tips	Layout tips
▪ Write simply and avoid jargon. ▪ Use short sentences. ▪ Use the active rather than the passive voice when you can (e.g. “specially trained project staff will run all training courses” rather than “all training courses will be run by specially trained project staff”). ▪ Check for spelling and grammar mistakes – if necessary get someone else to read it through and make corrections. ▪ Revise and rewrite if necessary. ▪ Don’t exaggerate. ▪ Write for a non-technical reader.	▪ Use headings and sub-headings, but do so consistently e.g. all headings in one lettering or size, all sub-headings in another. ▪ Number your pages. ▪ Bind or staple the document in the right order. ▪ Use white space – have wide margins. ▪ Don’t crowd the text. ▪ Use a font that is easy to read.

Why do you think it is important to “clean and package” your proposal well?

Your proposal needs to be inviting. The reader shouldn’t groan and avoid reading the proposal. He or she should want to find out what it is about, find it easy and interesting to read, and feel proud to be a donor for your project.

Follow-up

There are two kinds of follow-up related to the writing of funding proposals. Firstly there is the "what's happening?" kind of follow-up, when you have submitted a proposal and waited some time for a response. Secondly, if you are fortunate enough to be successful in your application, there is the follow-up that helps to build strong and supportive ties between project/organisation and donor.

Follow-up the proposal

So, you have done a proposal that meets all the donor criteria, you have submitted it in good time. You might get a quick response. You might not. Time drags on and you are not sure where your stand.

What is the appropriate way for a project or organisation to deal with this situation?

Make sure your proposal has arrived and been received by the donor. Then you wait. After a reasonable period of time (this should be determined either by when the donor representative told you you could expect a response, or, if are you not sure about when to expect an answer, after about a month or six weeks), you should follow-up the proposal. You could do this either:

- By telephoning the donor representative to ask how your application is doing, and by when you should expect a response; or
- Following up in writing to ask how your application is doing, and by when you should expect a response.

Such follow-ups should be:

- Politely worded and pleasant;
- Persuasive rather than aggressive.

Remember that the donor does not owe you anything. You may hope that donor representatives will be helpful and treat you with respect, but there is no guarantee. Nevertheless, you cannot afford to get a reputation for being demanding or for treating donor grants as your "right". Such a reputation travels quickly in donor circles and may make future applications less likely to be successful. You do not want to alienate the donor community.

Even if the answer is "no" at the end of the process, this does not mean that you have reached the end of your relationship with the donor. There are often good reasons for a "no" answer, and you are entitled to ask for a reason for rejection, if one is not offered. Some possible reasons for refusal include:

- The donor's criteria for giving grants are not met by your proposal;
- The proposal is not seen as being in a priority area for the donor (geographical or issue priority);
- The proposal does not, for some reason, impress the representative who did the initial screening;

- The donor does not have sufficient funds available at this time to support the proposal.

The more you know about the reasons for refusal, the less likely you are to make the same mistake the next time. Remember to do your homework. Sending an inappropriate proposal is a waste of everyone's time.

Follow-up the grant

You have just heard the good news that your proposal has been successful. The donor is happy with your proposal. It was clearly a job well done. Congratulations!

Is this the end of the process?

No. In fact, it is the beginning.

From now on you need to work at building up a strong relationship with this donor so that, when the time comes, you have a good chance of having other successful proposals and of forming an ongoing relationship with the donor that is beneficial to both parties.

Here are some of the things you need to do to build a strong relationship with a new donor:

- Thank the donor for the favourable response**.** By approving your proposal, the donor has shown that your work is valued. You need to respond in a way that shows that you value the donor's commitment and support.

- Keep the donor up-to-date on what is going on in the project and/or the organisation. This means sending regular reports and information that may be of use or interest to the donor. If you have done your homework properly, you should be able to personalise this process of keeping the donor up-to-date. For example: "As we know you are involved in supporting similar work in other developing countries, we thought you would be interested in this case study on our AIDS orphans project."

- Invite donors to your events – even if you think they may not be able to come.

- Meet the reporting requirements of the donor. This means providing the right information (narrative and financial), in the right format, at the right time. As soon as you sign a contract with a donor, diarise when reports are due. Make a note in your diary for a month before the reports are due so that you have them ready on time. Set mechanisms in place for collecting the information that will be required. You need a monitoring and evaluation system (See the toolkit on Monitoring and Evaluation). Keep the documentation that is required.

- Be available for meetings with representatives of the donor. Be ready to answer questions, organise field trips, and/or explain details. Wherever possible, get donor representatives into the field where they can meet the people whom the donor contribution is actually helping.

- Keep communication open at all times.

- Make sure that you know what the donor is hoping to get from the relationship, and then provide it. If you have done your homework well, you will know what the donor is interested in. You can also ask: "What can we do or provide that will help you in your work?" It may be information, it may be participation in conferences, it may just be the sharing of experiences. In this way, the donor/project relationship becomes a real partnership.

REMEMBER THAT, BY SERVICING YOUR DONORS, YOU CREATE THE POTENTIAL FOR LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS.

BEST PRACTICE : EXAMPLE OF A PROPOSAL

Here is an example of what a good proposal might look like. Remember, though, that each proposal is different.

Funding Proposal

FOR THE MERVIS FOUNDATION

Submitted by:

The Agency Supporting Our Children (ASOC)

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3456 Capital City
DEVELOPING COUNTRY

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Contact Person: Amina Tehani

PROJECT TITLE:

Communities in Support of AIDS Orphans:

A project to train communities in urban and peri-urban areas to take care of AIDS orphans without dividing families or institutionalising children.

March 2003

SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSAL

The Agency Supporting Our Children (ASOC) is setting up a project aimed at preparing communities to support AIDS orphans in a home-based, community context. The project will be run in two pilot districts, one urban and one peri-urban, over two years. The project will include:

- Material support (to be administered by ASOC and provided by District Governments);
- Training of professionals at community level to enable them to provide the professional support needed to AIDS orphans within their districts;
- Co-ordination of community-based project activities.

The project is expected to reach between 150 and 300 professionals and 10 000 AIDS orphans.

The project, which is viewed as a pilot, will emphasise :

- Enabling children to reach their full potential by providing psychological, material and social support;
- Keeping families together in a community context;
- Establishing community-based projects and co-ordinating structures to ensure sustainability;
- Careful monitoring, evaluation and recording in order to facilitate replicability.

ASOC will cover all administrative costs through donations from member congregations. We are requesting support from the Mervis Foundation towards the costs of training and co-ordination.

CONTENTS

SECTION 1: CONTEXT

1.1 Background to HIV/AIDS epidemic in Developing Country

Over the past 20 years, the HIV/AIDS epidemic in our country has escalated enormously. According to a World Health Organisation (WHO) report (2001), there are currently 6 million infected people living in the country, or one in every three people. Over the past ten years, AIDS has become the main cause of mortality in the country, and in the past three years, there have been nearly one million AIDS-related deaths (WHO 2001). The WHO report estimates that there are at least 250 000 AIDS orphans in the country. On the encouraging side, the rate of new infections has dropped over the past three years. Whereas in 1998, there was an annual increase of 10% in the rate of infection among adults, this dropped to 5% in 2001 (National Health Department Report for 2001). Most health experts attribute this reduction in the rate of infection to the powerful education campaign which has been conducted by non-governmental and governmental agencies in the country over the past five years. In addition, the fact that affordable anti-retroviral drugs are now available at all government clinics throughout the country means that the death rate from AIDS is likely to drop over the next few years.

However, we already have a sizeable AIDS orphan population in this country. Research in other developing countries has shown that, where the problem of AIDS orphans is not addressed successfully, infection rates begin to climb again when these orphans reach young adulthood. Children growing up without parental or community support are more likely to contract the disease than those who enjoy such support (UNDP Report, 2000).

Our country has very few facilities or services for addressing the issue of AIDS orphans. What resources exist are in the form of institutions. Not only can these institutions provide care for very few children, but studies such as that of the UNDP mentioned above confirm that children raised in institutions are more vulnerable to HIV than those cared for in the community. Institutional care can lead to the break-up of young families, already devastated by the loss of a parent or parents. The difficult logistics of cost-effective institutional care often mean that siblings are separated and children lose their last contact with their family support system.

Institutional care has also been shown to be very costly. In studies done in other developing countries (UNDP 2000), the cost of providing support to an AIDS orphan within the community has been shown to be less than a third of the cost of institutionalised care. This support can take the form of, for example, grants to households headed by teenage family members, special care centres at places like schools and clinics, where such families can receive guidance and support, and surrogate grandparenting schemes.

1.2 Background to the Agency Supporting Our Children (ASOC) involvement in work with AIDS orphans

ASOC was set up in 1995 by a consortium of religious organisations, cutting across all denominations and mainstream religions. Current members of our Board of Trustees include prominent figures in the Muslim and Christian communities (see list of Board members in Appendix 1). During the past six years, we have focused on providing support to AIDS orphans through the structures of our religious communities. This has included:

- a service for finding foster homes for such orphans through which 1 250 orphans have been placed;
- an education and support project in existing institutions; and
- a nationwide education project for teachers to help them deal with the challenges of having AIDS orphans in schools and classes.

Details of this work are included in our annual report for 2002 (see Appendix 2).

Until now, the work has been funded by contributions from our congregations. However, we believe that a more concerted effort is needed to prepare communities to deal with the challenges. We are, therefore, proposing an extended education approach which, we believe, will also stimulate community-based activities to address the issue. For such a project, more resources will be needed than we can hope to raise from our congregations, many of which are themselves poor. We are aware of the excellent work that has been done with the support of the Mervis Foundation in our neighbouring countries. In particular, we have been inspired by the work of the AIDS Orphans Support Consortium in Neighbouring Developing Country 1. As the project we have in mind is very similar to the AOSC Community-based Orphan Support Project, we are sending you this proposal in the hope that you will be able to support our work.

SECTION 2: OBJECTIVES OF THE ASOC COMMUNITIES IN SUPPORT OF AIDS ORPHANS PROJECT

The overall vision of ASOC is encapsulated in the following statement:

ASOC works to create a society in which every child is celebrated as a unique and valued creation of God, and is encouraged to fulfil his or her full potential.

We do this through:

- Involving our communities and congregations in supporting orphans;
- Conducting education campaigns among professionals to equip them to face new challenges; and
- Piloting cost-effective and family-friendly approaches to orphan support and care.

The goal of the Communities in Support of AIDS Orphans Project can be stated as follows:

Within the next five years, every child orphaned by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this country will be living in a family context, supported by the community, and enjoying an acceptable standard of social, psychological and material care.

More specifically, the purpose of the project is:

Within two years, community-based support and care is provided to all HIV/AIDS orphans living in District A (peri-urban) and District Z (urban), with an emphasis on keeping families together and ensuring that there is adequate social, psychological and material care for the orphans.

SECTION 3: ENVISAGED PROCESS

3.1 Overview

The intention is to use Districts A and Z (where the numbers of orphans, according to the WHO report quoted above, are highest) to pilot our approach. An estimated 5 000 orphans are living in each District. The intervention will be carefully monitored and evaluated (baseline studies have already been conducted) and recorded in order to make replicability in other districts and by other agencies possible.

In order to achieve success in the pilots, we have entered into a partnership with the District Governments who have agreed to provide grants to cover the material needs of the orphans for a five year period. The grants will be administered by a central office of ASOC in each district. ASOC funds, raised from member congregations, will be used to cover administrative costs. The ASOC district offices will be responsible for locating orphans and ensuring that grants are appropriately used. Detailed reports will be provided to District Governments. To achieve this, ASOC will employ approximately ten trained community workers in each District. Costs of these community workers will be covered through the ASOC administration fund.

However, we believe that, for the project to succeed, extensive community training is needed in the form of intensive interventions with professionals from the following fields:

- educators;
- religious community leadership (clerical and lay);
- health professionals;
- social workers;
- district government officials in other categories.

It is for this work that we are seeking support from the Mervis Foundation as we are aware that your emphasis is on education and training.

Training, which will involve both theoretical and practical work, will be made specific to each group, but, in general, will cover:

- Identifying AIDS orphans in the community;
- HIV/AIDS – causes and impacts of the epidemic;
- The needs and care of at-risk children;
- Counselling at-risk children – psychological, social and health counselling;
- Providing support to households headed by teenagers;
- Setting up and running projects.

Each group will consist of a minimum of 15 participants and a maximum of 30. The groups will be run in each district. The intention, therefore, is to reach between 150 and 300 professionals across the two districts. Because of the importance of involving both men and women in this work, we will aim to have 50% of the participants from each gender group.

Training will be conducted in four three-day sessions per year over two years, making a total of 24 days training per group in each district. The National Technical Institution (NTI) has agreed to accredit the training at certificate level. This means that it will approve materials and do quality control on delivery of training. Certification qualification will be assessed at the end of the two years by evaluation of project involvement. This will be done by ASOC personnel with quality control by the NTI.

In addition, it is our intention to hold quarterly co-ordinating sessions at which representatives of each of the identified groups in a district can share experiences and work out ways to co-ordinate activities.

We see this as a two-year process, at the end of which we believe that the district communities will be able to sustain their efforts without our direct support. All the training interventions will be aimed at creating district community level independence and co-operation. ASOC will, however, continue to administer the material grants for at least a further three years, as per our agreement with the District Governments.

Training will be conducted by skilled and experienced community workers based on materials developed for the project by experts in the field. The intention is to draw on materials from other countries and to make our materials widely available through the Internet. We would welcome suggestions from the Mervis Foundation with regard to us being able to access existing materials and to make our materials available to others.

3.2 Outputs

The planned outputs for the two-year period are as follows:

- Five courses, each consisting of eight modules;
- Participants' workbooks and facilitators' guides for each Module;
- A total of 80 three-day modules run (40 in each district, eight for each of the five groups);
- Between 150 and 300 certificated graduates of the programme;
- At least five projects operating effectively in each district;
- Independent District Co-ordinating Committees in each of the two districts as a basis for sustainability;
- A report detailing the experiences and impact of the project as a basis for replicability.

4 SECTION 4: CONCLUSION

In summary:

- We are requesting support from the Mervis Foundation for the training component of our Communities in Support of AIDS Orphans Project.
- This project is specifically aimed at ensuring that every AIDS orphan in this country has the social, psychological and material support required to fulfil his/her potential.
- We believe that the context in which we are operating makes such a project an imperative. Our intention is to pilot the project in two districts, as models for replicability by other agencies.
- The emphasis on district development and community-based projects makes it likely that the project will be sustainable at community level.
- We already have substantial support from, and have entered into a partnership with, the two District Governments involved in the project to provide material support to AIDS orphans in the district communities, outside of the concept of institutional care.
- We believe that our track record and our management and financial competencies (see Appendix 2, a copy of our most recent annual report, for confirmation of this) qualify us to make a success of this project. The staff from our head office who will be involved are highly skilled and experienced (brief biographies of the two key staff members are included as Appendix 3).

SECTION 5: BUDGET SUMMARY

A full budget, detailing line items, is included as Appendix 4. In brief, we are asking the Mervis Foundation to provide the sum of US$ 70 000 in Year 1, and US$ 100 000 in Year 2. This would cover the following:

	Year 1	Year 2
Materials development and production	US$ 20 000	US$15 000
Co-ordination workshops	US$ 15 000	US$ 20 000
Training sessions - logistics	US$ 30 000	US$ 45 000
Additional staff costs	US$ 5 000	US$ 20 000

This averages out at between US$ 1 133 and US$ 567 per professional, and US$ 17 per AIDS orphans helped. The ratio of benefits to costs will be substantially increased if the project proves replicable, as we expect it will.

We have also requested funding from the Steinhobel Foundation and the Backbrunberger Foundation, to cover the costs of staff training and counselling, and the cost of supporting community-based projects (seed money) respectively.

All costs related to administration will be born by ASOC, from donations made by member congregations. District Governments have agreed to cover the direct material grants. A letter from each of the District Government heads to this effect is included as Appendix 5.

Should you feel that this amount is more than you can contribute, we ask you to consider funding one of the proposed two districts, at half the cost of the total requested.

We look forward to hearing from you and hope that we can work together in the future.

ASOC
March 20 2003

RESOURCES

Proposals that Make a Difference: How to write effective grant proposals, Oxford Leaning Space, oxis@fahamu.org.uk

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

CROP	C = Context R = Relevance (of the context for your and the donor) O = Objectives P = Process.
Indicators	Indicators are signs or benchmarks against which to assess progress; an example would be "75% of the women heads of household in the ABC area are able to feed themselves and their families at a level which the WHO has identified as 'healthy'".
Logframe analysis	LFA is a particular format used for planning a project.
Outputs	Outputs are the tangible things (activities, products) that come from the activities; examples of "outputs" include training workshops, publications, reports etc.
Replicability	Replicability means the potential to use the learnings from this project to design another very similar one somewhere else.
Sustainability	Sustainability here means the potential for the impact created by the project to be sustained after the end of the project.