# Key questions grant-makers ask

The many webinars and blog posts that deal with aspects of proposal writing would suggest that even the most seasoned fund developers are beset with butterflies when faced with building a proposal application. Most of us consider the proposal to be at the heart of the fund development process and to be the most daunting aspect of the process, however, a methodical approach might ease these anxieties and trepidations.

Perhaps a useful primer would be to begin by answering the questions a grant-maker is most likely to ask of a proposal. Here is a checklist you may wish to complete to help you collate the information and data.

**Key questions Donors/Grantmakers ask of a proposed program/project**

|  | Key questions Donors/Grantmakers ask | Your response |
| --- | --- | --- |
| PROJECT / PROGRAMME | 1. What is being proposed, a **project** or a **programme**?   *Will it advance a fresh, different, and/or innovative activity or enquiry?* |  |
| 1. Is the proposed programme/project **exemplary** and/or   innovative - methodologically, organisationally, and socially?  *How and in what way?* |  |
| RATIONALE | 1. What are the main **questions or/and issues** the project will tackle? |  |
| 1. What is the **main** **reason** for the project?   *Why is it important to the organisation/institution? Will it benefit different constituencies and/or sectors?* |  |
| 1. What are the project’s key **goals?**   *What does the project wish to accomplish?* |  |
| 1. What are the project’s specific **objectives?**   *What**specifically**will the project produce?* |  |
| 1. What are the **expected outcomes and benefits** of the project?   *What**will the project actually achieve?* *What affect will it have on its beneficiaries? Will it meet a specific donor’s requirements?* |  |
| CAPACITY | 1. What **length of time** is needed to realise project goals and objectives and achieve the specified outcomes? |  |
| 1. How will the project be **mainstreamed** and sustained beyond donor funding?   *Can and will the initiative be absorbed into the host organisation/institution when the grant ends?* |  |
| 1. Who is the **Project Leader**?   *Does the project leader have the requisite* ***knowledge and expertise*** *to direct and manage the project?*  Has the Project Leader **directed and managed** a project of this nature and size before? |  |
| 1. What **preparatory steps** will the project leader take to formulate /shape this activity?   *Outline, LFA, Theory of change, So that…Success Equation?* |  |
| 1. What monitoring, evaluation, and stewardship activities will s/he incorporate? |  |
| IMPLEMENTATION | 1. What will be the main **approaches or strategies** to achieve project goals and objectives?   *Is there an explicit and clear* ***implementation plan*** *for executing the programme? How would key activities be pursued, when and by whom?* |  |
| 1. Does the proposed project connect with the **strategic vision and plan** of the institution or organisation?   *How does it address the institutional plan?* |  |
| 1. Does the proposed project exist elsewhere? *If so, why pursue a similar project?* |  |
| 1. Would there be any institutional/inter-institutional and local/national/international **collaborations**? *What kind of partnerships will be formed?* |  |
| 1. What would ultimate **success** look like?   *What criteria would be used to articulate/describe success?* |  |
| VALUE | 1. Does the project address questions of **equity, diversity, and inclusion**?   *How does the project/programme and its host institution define and approach equity, diversity, and inclusion?* |  |
| 1. Does the project advance **equity** (‘race’/gender/other kinds), **diversity and inclusion**? *How and in what ways?* |  |
| 1. Does the proposed project have **importance or value** beyond the host organisation/institution – e.g. *for other institutions, nationally, continentally, and globally?* |  |
| FINANCES | 1. Is the **budget requested realistic** for the success of the project and in relation to the capacities of the project leader, the project team, and the host organisation / institution? |  |
| 1. Do the **budget amounts** cover every year of the project, the total period of the project?   *Will the rows and columns all tally and be visually displayed (graphs)?*  *Will every line item be explained?* |  |
| 1. Is the **budget requested realistic** for the success of the project and in relation to the capacities of the project leader, the project team, and the host organisation / institution? |  |
| 1. Is there **congruence** between the budget and proposal narrative? |  |
| REPORTING | 1. How will data & details be **captured** on the database? |  |
| 1. Will there be **a reporting schedule**   *How will the project/programme report to the donor?* |  |
| 1. Will the project be implemented in phases for the donor to schedule site **visits**. |  |