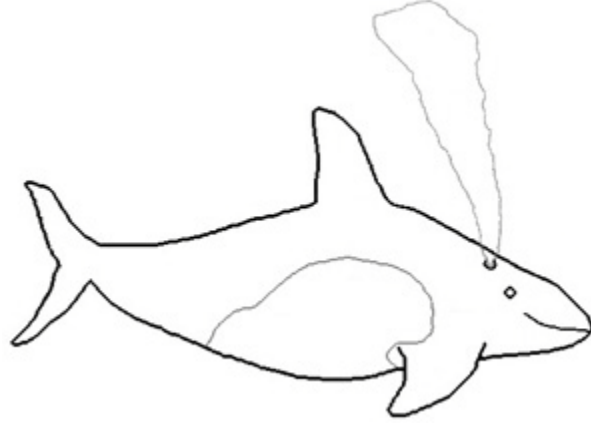


GRANT PROPOSAL COMPONENTS: The Great Grant Whale



Preparing a proposal when the funding source guidelines do not specify a format may seem to be a whale of a problem. One way to approach this gargantuan task is to use a generic format including the ten elements most commonly requested in proposal instructions. (The whale reappears at the end of this story...)

Title: Use a short, self-explanatory title.

The title is a hint of things to come. Encompass the project, but control the urge to use colons. Titles last forever.

Project Summary/Abstract: Give a succinct explanation of the project and its impact.

This should cover the need, the solution, the objectives and highlight any unique aspects of your project. Write this last after you've had a chance to address all the other components.

Introduction: Describe who you are, where you are, what you do and who you serve.

This provides the reader a frame of reference. Highlight anything particularly germane to the project at hand. A thumbnail, one-paragraph sketch is sufficient.

Problem/Need Statement: Provide factual, non-critical proof you understand the problem and have a solution.

Remember the funding source has already identified the problem. Convince them you share in the understanding of the problem. Argue for the problem's importance using statistical, historical and/or philosophical arguments. Rely on studies, publications, expert testimony, etc. Discuss what others have done in the area. (Begin with national generalizations and end with specific local descriptors.) Convince them your solution will work.

Objectives: Mission, goals and measurable objectives describe anticipated results.

Objectives explain exactly what you will achieve. They describe the changes resulting from the action(s) to be taken in measurable terms, often including a time frame. An objective is never "to get money" or "to buy something." (An objective is not "to acquire a new computer," but might be "to improve services by providing direct web access for X number of people within the two years." An objective is not "to hire staff" but might be "to expand services and serve X more clients.")

Work Plan: Describe specific activities in detail.

Outline "who will do what, when and how." For complicated projects, use a chart or timetable. Include an evaluation and dissemination component.

Evaluation - Describe how you will evaluate progress.

Explain how you will assess the measurable objectives (outcome) and proposed activities executed (process). Describe the roles of any external evaluators. Explain reporting procedures (within the

institution and to the funding source) and describe any plans for broader dissemination of results – articles, papers, presentations, etc.

Staff – Describe critical personnel qualifications.

Prove you have people who can get things done. For current staff, focus on appropriate experiences and append resumes. For proposed staff, provide a "want ad" and append job descriptions. Describe administrative responsibilities and explain who is ultimately responsible.

Conclusion - Reinforce the request.

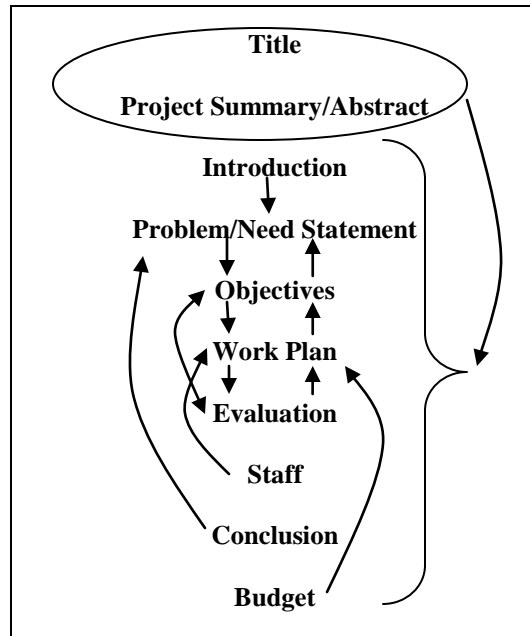
Address the issue of project continuation after the end of the award period. Offer to provide any other information that might help the funding source in considering the project.

Budget - Provide a budget narrative that explains justifies item in the budget.

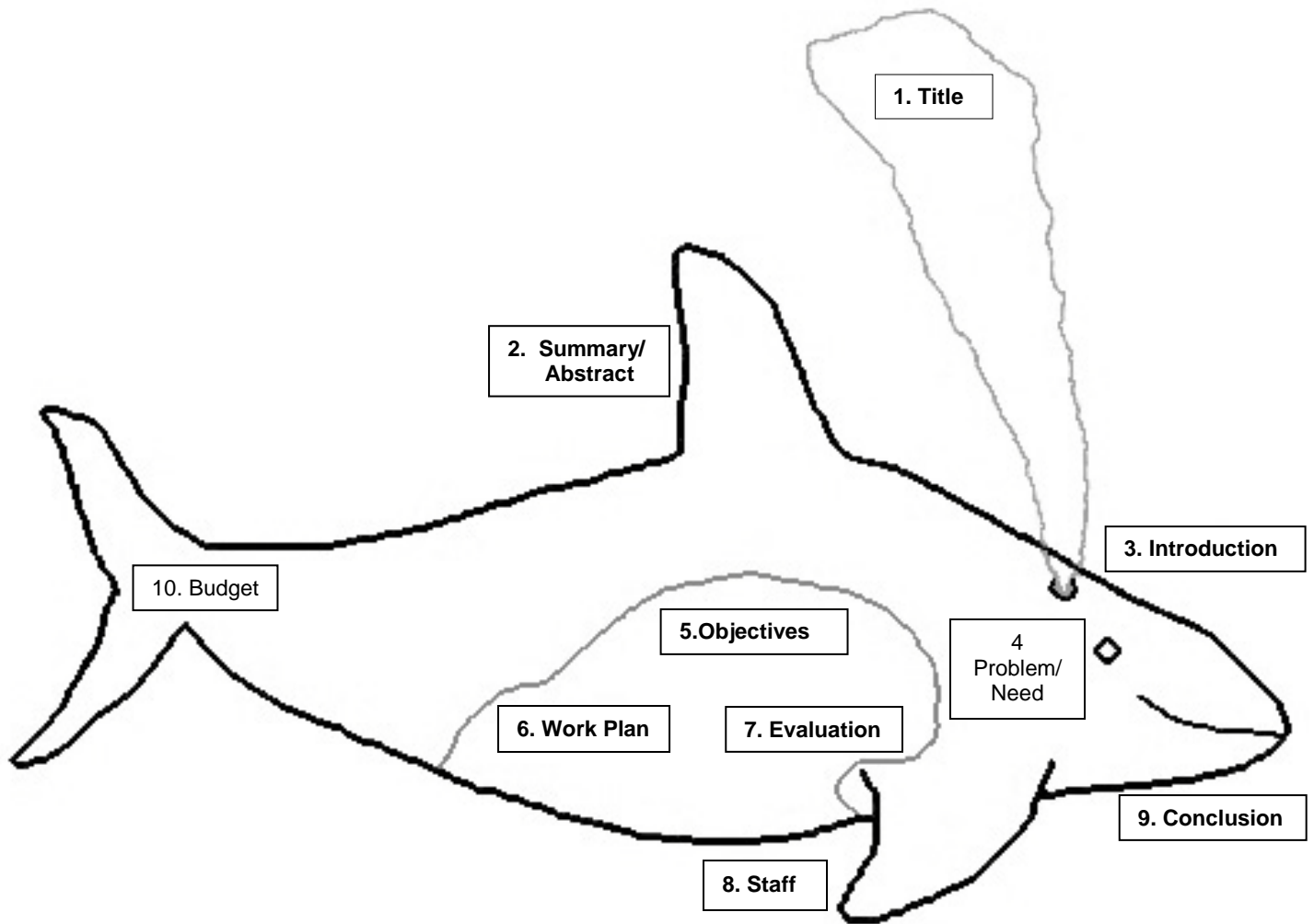
This should cover both the amount requested and the institution's financial contribution. If there are no hard cash contributions, focus on in-kind contributions and person hours that have been or will be committed to the project. Identify other external funding sources secured or ones that may be approached. Append a detailed budget broken down with specific expenses for the following categories: personnel, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, contractual, construction, other and Facilities & Administrative Costs (if allowable).

These ten elements do not exist in independent vacuums. They are inter-related and build upon each other. Rather than floundering around trying to remember what goes where, here are two memory-jogging diagrams.

For those of you who think linearly, the usual order of presentation is given in the diagram below. Arrows indicate the interrelationships between the different elements. Note for the most part, each element builds on the one that has gone before, but many of them have multiple interrelationships (making for a rather confusing diagram).



Hence, we return to the great grant whale.



Project Title (1.) – The plume announces a whale's presence, providing a hint of things to come.

Project Summary (2.) – The tall dorsal fin announces an orca whale is surfacing, letting you know what kind of whale (I mean, proposal) is coming. It touches on the major points: Problem/need addressed, work plan's central activities, what's unique (a "hook") and objectives and consequences. (Leads into proposal.)

Introduction (3) – The blowhole from which the plume spouts provides a frame of reference. By the time you see this, you have a pretty good idea of what's coming. (Leads into the need/problem statement.)

Problem/Need Statement (4.) – Seeing-eye-to-eye establishes a connection, a shared understanding of the nature of the problem. We're prepared to see the great belly of the beast. (Leads into objectives.)

Objectives (5.) and Work Plan (6.) and Evaluation (7.) – The white-patched belly is the core of the proposal. The three elements are interrelated.

- Objectives are anticipated measurable achievements that address all the needs identified and lead into the work plan and evaluation.
- The work plan describes how the objectives will be met and leads into the evaluation.
- The evaluation explains how you'll measure progress in the work plan and success in meeting your objectives.

Staff (8.) – Staff are the paddle-like flippers that steers the project through rough seas. Without them, the work plan goes nowhere (and our whale flounders around).

Conclusion (9.) – The mouth with large, cone-shaped teeth, is the last thing the prey sees, a last chance to snag the reader with a reminder of the shared understanding crafted in the need/problem statement.

Budget (10.) – The flukes (dollars) power the project. You have to justify how much you need to feed the beast (what it's going to cost) to keep it going.