

# Essentials of Developing a Compelling Grant Proposal

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# The Big Secret:

Writing the grant is the **final** step  
in developing a successful proposal



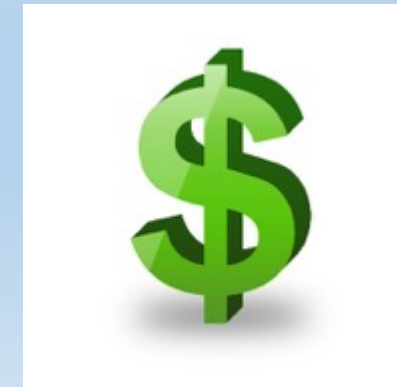
# Where to start?

1. Develop a project, then search for a funder with common goals.

OR

2. Find a funding source and change the project to chase the money.

Which do you think will make a more compelling proposal AND fulfill your organization's mission more effectively?



# Getting started – ask the right questions.

- Is the project in your strategic plan / work plan?  
Opportunistic projects will occasionally be worth pursuing, but should be the exception, rather than the rule.
- What are the project goals and objectives?
- What technical assistance will you need to develop your proposal?
- What partnerships are necessary and/or helpful for success?
- What is a reasonable project budget (will come later in the process)?
- What is the project timeline?



# Q1: Why this project?

- Why *this* project, *why* now?
- Which planning documents make this project necessary? Examples:
  - Organizational strategic plan
  - Annual work plan
  - Basin limiting factors analysis
  - Federal/state fisheries (ESU) recovery plan?

## Q2: What are the project goals and objectives?

- What environmental (or social) condition will be improved by this project?
- How will you measure success? Take a first guess at quantifying those measures.
- Examples:
  - Goals: Improve rearing habitat in Big Creek, improve juvenile passage in Swift River.
  - Objectives: Plant 1,500 native trees and shrubs on 3 acres along 625 linear feet on riparian land. Add 75 pieces of large wood in complex logjams.

# Q3: What technical assistance will you need to develop your proposal?

- Professional engineering designs (culverts, channel realignment, etc)
- Planting prescriptions
- Monitoring protocols, staff/volunteer training, survey design, QA/QC?

## Q4: What partnerships are necessary and/or helpful for success?

- Natural Resource agencies (Federal, State, County, SWCD) for technical support and review
- Landowner relationships. Many interactions are helpful, even necessary, and take time—years in some cases—to develop.
- Community groups, including other NGOs, schools (volunteer support, outreach, clients/beneficiaries of the projects)
- Funders – agencies, foundations, individual donors



Q5: What is a reasonable project budget (will come later in the process)?

Typical budget line items:

- Staff salaries (include taxes & benefits)
- Contracted services
- Supplies and equipment
- Mileage
- Overhead/indirect costs
- Post-project monitoring

## Sample internal budgeting spreadsheet

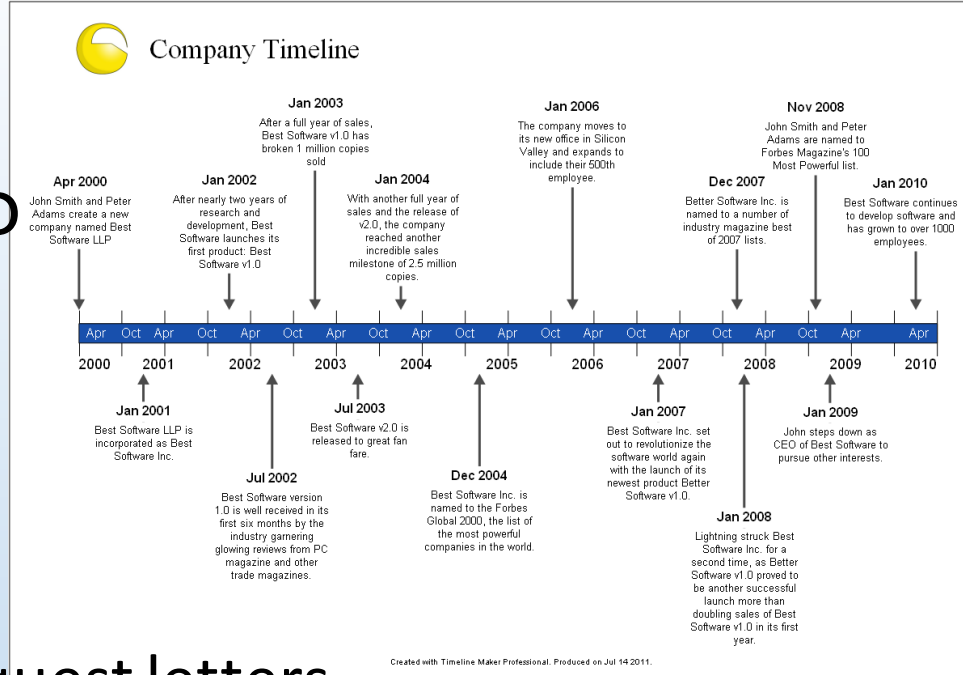
Modified from an actual project

Units	Unit Cost	Description	Funder 1	Funder 2	Funder 3	In-kind	Subtotal	
300	30	Payroll-Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator	5,400	1,800	1,800		9,000	
400	34	Payroll-Restoration Project Manager	5,440	3,060	2,720	2,380	13,600	
1	2500	Contract: xxxxx			2,500		2,500	
1	2500	Contract: xxxxx			2,500		2,500	
1	2620	Equipment: Safety vests, waders, polarized sunglasses	2,000	140	480		2,620	
1	3000	Contract: Dr. xxxxxxxx, scientific oversight	1,000			2,000	3,000	
1	5000	College intern (20 hrs/wk * 17 weeks * \$10/hr)				5,000	5,000	
1079	0.575	Mileage/Gas				620	620	
		Subtotal	13,840	5,000	10,000	10,000	38,840	
			36%	13%	26%	26%	100%	
		None of these funders allow indirect costs						

# Q6: What is the project timeline?

- Project Development: Is a technical assistance grant necessary before developing the main project?
- Proposal Writing for multiple, matching sources (include plenty of time to develop partnerships and request letters of support).
- Time until funds are secured
- Permitting
- Implementation
- Report writing
- Post-project monitoring

Watershed Council restoration project timelines are usually 2-5 years, and often longer, especially with 3 years of post-project monitoring!



# Researching funding sources

- Most government & foundation funders *require* match funding. The more match, the more competitive the proposal.
- Most agencies & foundations will post their grant award histories.
- Use the website [guidestar.com](http://guidestar.com) to find foundation grant award histories. They are required to disclose this information in their 990 forms.
- Look at *multiple* years of funding; check websites for stated award strategies, average and maximum awards, applicant eligibility, geographic restrictions, programmatic restrictions, project elements they will *not* fund.



# Treat grantors as major donors



- Build relationships with program officers and other key agency/foundation employees.
- When it is allowed, call/email well in advance of the deadline and discuss your project. You will often get hints on how to make your project more competitive!
- Send annual reports, newsletters, other information to potential funders.

# Think like a grantor.

- Wearing the grantor hat, read the grant proposal:
- Does this proposal fit our priorities and requirements?
- Does it make sense? All the pieces fit together?
- Why should I fund it?
- Is anything suspicious?
- How does it rank with other proposals?

# Common reasons for getting turned down for funding

- Failure to follow grantor's very specific directions
- Submitting the proposal after the deadline
- Proposal's goals not a good match for grantor's goals
- Unclear objectives/measures of success, project environmental/social benefits, monitoring strategy,
- Requested funds greater than grantor's stated range or at top of range without a compelling reason for such a large request
- Project duplicates another organization's request
- Poor writing (unclear, grammar, punctuation—reflects on applicant)



# Common elements of a successful grant proposal

Compelling need is well-articulated

Organizational capacity to complete project is demonstrated

Organization has a history of success

Budget is reasonable and in the range of similar projects in the same geographic area

Community support demonstrated through partnerships, letters of support.

Multiple funding sources, so no single grantor feels they are “carrying” the project.





# Oregon Watershed Council funding sources other than OWEB

- National: NFWF (BBN, Fivestar, etc), EPA's RGI,
- State: ODFW Fish Passage & Screening, ODA, ODEQ 319
- Local: tax-supported SWCDs, counties, cities, county weed boards
- Foundations: OCF, Meyer Memorial Trust, Collins Foundation, McKenzie River Gathering, Spirit Mtn. Community Fund, TNC (Pacific Power & PGE Salmon Funds), smaller local family foundations
- Corporate (usually much smaller than other sources)
- Mitigation funds

