Helpful Hints for Proposal Writing

- **Ask for the money**—Ask in the first paragraph. The grantmaker knows why you are contacting them, so don't be shy, and come right out with it; they will appreciate knowing from the start.

- **Write to a real person**—Always address correspondence, such as letters of inquiry, to a particular person except in the rare occasion where a person cannot be identified, as in some online applications.

- **Address grantmaker priorities**—Without overdoing so, use their own language to demonstrate your common priorities.

- **Avoid jargon and the overuse of acronyms**—Use language that conveys your program to a perceptive and well-educated audience who are usually not experts in your field.

- **Use active and persuasive language**—Make your case, positively demonstrating the work you will do. For instance, use "will" instead of "would."

- **Incorporate bullets, tables, and white space in your proposal when possible**—Reviewers are often reading a sizeable stack of proposals; highlight important points with bullets and offer visual breaks within your text.

- **Tap into the grantmaker's emotions**—But don’t overdo it; it is okay to pull a heart string or two with private grantmakers. If available, use personal stories about the participants and/or beneficiaries of your program. Add participant quotes and/or photos, if appropriate, when showing program impact.

- **Answer the grantmaker's questions**—Use data and best practice information to additionally address logic and intellect.

- **Avoid involving institutional budget cuts in your need statement**—Sell the grantmaker on the importance, innovation, and impact of your efforts. Winning proposals present strong programs with appropriate resources for success.

- **Second Opinion**—Always have a colleague or coworker review your proposal, preferably someone not familiar with the project. Time permitting, for priority projects, GIFT Center staff will provide feedback on proposal drafts.