Proposal Elements

After the appropriate program and budget planning, and before diving into your proposal writing, thoroughly review the funder's guidelines and instructions, read them once more, and then continue referring back to them throughout the proposal process. The content and order of your proposal will vary depending on the grantmaker's guidelines.

Though guidelines do widely vary, most grantmakers are looking for similar information and ask that you describe your project or program using the following program essentials:

- **Executive summary**—This section must be able to stand alone and is the most important proposal element besides the budget. Answer the following: What organization wants to do what? How much money are you requesting? How long will your project take? Why is it important? How is this connected to the grantmaker's priorities? Ideally, include a brief preview/one sentence impact statement within the summary—what will change as a result of the grantmaker’s investment?

- **Organizational information**—Address history, mission, and accomplishments. Why is the University best qualified to implement this program? This section commonly causes confusion, considering the vastness of our institution and the wide variety of pieces and parts. Grantmakers most often want to know about the organizational unit closest to the proposed project, usually your department or college. However, with allowable space, it is best to address organizational information relating to the UA Foundation and UA along with your unit information. The GIFT Center can provide appropriate language and advice in developing this section of the proposal.

- **Need or problem statement**—Private grantmakers characteristically want to make a difference in the world and are most interested in programs that have clear impact in the community beyond the needs of a specific department or program. Consider impact when crafting your need statement: What is the community condition that you are addressing and what will improve as a result of your work? Emphasize who will benefit and the public good that you will achieve.

- **Program description**—This will comprise the bulk of your proposal. Address the specific activities, people, participants, and facilities involved with your project. Also include any work and accomplishments that have already taken place and the time frame involved in your project, even if it is ongoing. Make sure to highlight anything that is unique and innovative about your approach along with any partners that are involved.

- **Goals and objectives**—State the larger overall goal of your project and then support that goal with specific and measurable objectives that will help you achieve this goal. Bullet this section to help show a logical progression. Most importantly, express your objectives in a manner that is measurable, whether quantitatively or qualitatively. Provide the number of participants in your program and use percentages to express change.

- **Evaluation**—How will you measure the success of your program? What data and tools will you use? Ensure that your evaluation plan specifically addresses your goals and objectives.
• **Dissemination**—How will you share your discoveries and/or accomplishments? Describe your target audience: peers, peer institutions, legislation, educators, the general public, etc. If appropriate, include a plan for crediting the funder in your dissemination.

• **Impact**—Though often addressed in sections above, it is critical that a clear impact statement is included somewhere in your proposal. Make sure that you answer these basic questions:

  o What social, educational, or research question or problem will you address?
  o What will change as a result of your work?
  o How much will it change?
  o How will you know?
  o Who will benefit from your program?

• **Sustainability**—How will your program continue beyond the grant funding that you are requesting? What other resources are currently committed to your work?

• **Budget**—This is a financial expression of your narrative, and the second most important component of the proposal. Include all expenses associated with your program, work with your business office, and include any other resources committed to the program (including in-kind), along with your plans for seeking other resources. It is also important that you present a financial picture of the entire project, not just the dollars you are requesting.