

10 Reasons Why Proposals are Not Funded

1. **It's apparent that there is not adequate institutional support for the project.** A project developed by one energetic, passionate individual is rarely successful. If you really are the only person interested in this project, it's probably not worth writing a proposal. Reviewers are skilled at discerning the degree of institutional support.
2. **Proposed activities don't match the funder's initiatives, programs and/or guidelines.** No matter how much you would like to sponsor a "Fun Run" for families, don't include that activity if it is not in line with the *grant priorities*. Pay close attention to the funder's priorities and make the link between your proposed project and the funder's interests. Funders are most interested in proven practices and research-based strategies.
3. **The proposal is too ambitious.** Carefully consider the amount of time, staff and money you'll have available. Develop a project that can realistically be completed – successfully. Many proposals promise much more than can be delivered.
4. **Proposed activities are not based on best practices.** You'll need to do some research here. If you are unfamiliar with best practices in this area, ask the funder for a resource or reference.
5. **It's not clear what you are trying to accomplish.** What are you trying to accomplish and how you will know when you get there? Write SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-phased) objectives. Then, develop activities that are directly related to reaching the objectives and a plan for measuring progress and outcomes. Make sure your proposed activities are well thought out and related to the objectives.
6. **Budget problems!** Lots can go wrong here. Every budget item must be clearly linked to an objective. Know that the reviewers will be looking for realistic budget figures that are clearly explained. Include adequate detail in the budget narrative. How did you come up with \$500 for printing? Down the road, budget modifications are easier to get approved if your initial budget was clear and concise.
7. **The proposed project is unlikely to be sustained past the funding period.** Most funders are keenly interested in sustainability issues. Take time to think this through, and present evidence that there is support and funding to carry this project into the future.
8. **The proposal is poorly written.** Make it easy for the reviewer to follow and use the same terms found in the guidelines. Your good ideas will be discounted or lost if the proposal is sloppy, rambling or full of typos and poor grammar. Each section will probably need to be written and rewritten several times before it's right. Allow plenty of time for reviewing and editing.
9. **The proposal is incomplete.** If it's in the instructions, it must be included in your proposal (even if it's repetitive or you think it's a bit ridiculous). The structure of your grant proposal should follow exactly the format indicated in the instructions. Make a checklist of everything required, and keep track of what's complete and what still needs work.
10. **The proposal was submitted late.** If the instructions require that the proposal must be received at 2:00 pm on January 30th, don't deliver it at 2:15 pm! Check to see if the proposal has to be *received* or *postmarked* by the due date – it makes a difference.