

Components of a Concept Paper

Funders often ask for brief 1- to 5-page concept paper prior to submission of a full proposal. This helps them save time by eliminating ideas that are not likely to be funded. The purpose of writing a concept paper is:

- to interest potential funders
- to determine whether a project idea is fundable
- to serve as the foundation of a full proposal

Funders that request concept papers often provide a template or format. If templates or formats are not provided, the following can serve as a useful concept paper structure.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Executive Summary identifies how and where the applicant's mission and the funder's mission intersect or align. It addresses the reasons why the funder should support projects in the given general area. It also introduces the applicant's partners and shows why the partners want to participate in the project. This section may include a brief organizational history and target audience description if relevant to the project or funder program goals.

RATIONALE

The Rationale or Need section outlines focuses on the problem to be solved, or the need to be addressed by the applicant's proposed project. This section states the purpose or need in such a way that the applicant's project is the best possible solution to the problem. This section should list reasons why the project should be supported.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project Description addresses why the applicant has the best solution and presents a compelling case for funding. The project description includes the project's measurable Goals and Objectives. The project description also includes an overview of the project's Methodology or Action Plan. The goals, objectives, and action plan should align closely with each other and accomplish goals within a proposed timeline. The project description typically concludes with a statement of outcomes and impact that indicates the funders ROI.

BUDGET

Budget information within a concept paper can be a basic outline of main categories for the project's revenue and expenses with a bottom-line funding amount. If the funder is interested in the project, a detailed budget will be requested.

If a given funder provides a specific template or format for a concept paper, the applicant must use the required structure