



Proposal Writing

Proposals need to persuade the selection committee that the proposed course of action is feasible and worthwhile.

Community or Independent Project Proposals: For grants that fund community-based or independent projects, applicants need to describe exactly how they will spend the time and resources allocated by the fellowship. Often you will be required to include a general timeline and budget that demonstrates the project's feasibility. Finally, applicants should discuss the lasting impacts of the fellowship project—whether that be the ways a fellowship would affect the applicants themselves or the mechanisms that would ensure that a community project would be sustainable after the applicant leaves.

Components of the Proposal:

The Project Abstract—provides an executive summary of the project. It opens with a statement of what you will be doing, followed by an explanation of how you will do it. You should then state why you are doing it, what is the intellectual or practical merit of your project? End by describing what you hope to achieve, that is, the project deliverable. A typical abstract contains no more than 150 words.

The Project Description—provides details of the project and describes how it will be implemented.

- **Introduction.** Open with a description of what you'll be doing for your project. State the problem, puzzle, or project goal.
- **Procedures or Methods.** Follow this section with a description of how you'll complete your project. Discuss your benchmarks and processes in detail.
- **Supporting Arguments or Literature Review.** Next, discuss why the project is important. What is it about your project that has scholarly and practical significance? What academic or scholarly resources do you expect to consult over the course of the project?
- **Outcomes or Expected Findings.** End by describing the outcome(s) of your project. What is the project deliverable?

***Note: When writing your project description, follow the structure of the project abstract.**

Components of the proposal in detail:

Preliminary bibliography

- What academic resources will you rely on to help you complete the project?
 - Provide a list of articles, books, and other scholarly resources that were consulted as you crafted the project description and/or you plan to use to complete your project.
- This section may be itemized.



Timeline and benchmarks

- What are the benchmarks for the project? What is your timeline for meeting these benchmarks and for completion of the project?
 - Benchmarks break the project into stages. Think: What is the first step? How do later steps depend on previous steps? How long will each step of the project take? At what points will you report back to your supervisor or faculty mentor?
- This section may be presented in table format.

Budget and budget justification

- Provide details of how you will use the money.
- This section should be researched and supported with evidence.
- Each item in the narrative must appear in the budget, and vice versa.
- Break down each item into parts and give specifics.
 - Provide material and supply specifications, quotes, hourly rates, stipend breakdowns, and travel details.
- Be realistic, but do not underestimate your needs.
- Be certain that your figures add up correctly.
- This section may be bulleted or presented in table format.

***Note:** A detailed budget signals to the review committee that you have carefully thought about the feasibility and execution of your project and provides, with a reasonable degree of confidence, that your project can be completed.

Anticipated outcomes

- For the project: What are some tangibles or deliverables that will allow you to demonstrate your work at the end of the project?
- For you: What will you get out of this experience? For example: Fall Fest presentation, presentation at regional/national meeting, journal publication, fellowship proposal, senior thesis, etc.
- This section may be bulleted.

What does it mean to have a well-written proposal?

The proposal is well-structured.

- The components of the application are listed above. Use them to divide your proposal into sections, and be certain to address the prompts for each section.

The rationale for the project is clear.

- Why should people care about your project? Why is it a problem worth addressing? Is the research question novel?

The means (methods) of completing the project are logical.

- Are the steps for completing the project well-defined? Are you using the correct methods or tools to do so?

The scope of the project is feasible.

- Can you complete the project in the expected timeframe? Do you have the resources to do so? Is your sample size or are your materials reasonable? Do you have the necessary technical or subject matter expertise?

The proposal is detailed and well-researched.

- Do you know what you need to do to complete the project, and have you provided evidence indicating so? Have you provided a level of detail so that the reviewers can understand exactly what you will be doing, and how?

The project and the proposal is thoughtful, reflective, and meaningful.

- In your proposal and in the essay, is the motivation for the project clear? Are the connections to your academic coursework logical? Are the connections to your future plans compelling?

Who can help me with my proposal and proposal writing?

- Work with your faculty mentor. Your faculty mentor will be the most familiar with your project, and has likely written and reviewed project proposals before, so s/he will know the best way to craft a strong proposal.
- The consultants in the Writing Center can help review your proposal prior to submission. Schedule an appointment online by going to: <https://clarku.mywconline.com/> or by calling the Writing Center at (508) 793-7405 (on campus x7405).
- The staff in the LEEP Center can help answer questions about your project. Attend a LEEP Center sponsored Writing Your Proposal Workshop, or email leepcenter@clarku.edu.

Proposal Writing Check List:

I have carefully read and followed the instructions for completion of this grant or fellowship proposal.

I am aware of the deadline and am leaving ample time to write my proposal.

My writing is clear, concise, and grammatically correct.

The order and structure of my proposal description follows that of my abstract.

The budget I have proposed corresponds to the narrative I have outlined.

I have calculated and totaled my costs accurately.

My objectives are clear and the scope of the project is feasible.

I have explained my project such that individuals not knowledgeable in my field can understand my proposed work.

I have proofread carefully and have shared my proposal with others for clarity and accuracy.