Proposal

Proposals are persuasive documents that are created to convince someone that they have a need and you are the person to fill the need. You will either convince someone that they need something that you can provide, or you will convince them that you provide something superior to what they are currently using. Proposals can be an offer to do research, to provide a product or service, or to receive a grant for various types of projects.

Present your proposal in a logical order and provide your reader with facts regarding the basic questions of who, what, where, when, and why. The most persuasive proposals will be superior in convention (grammar, punctuation, and usage), organization, and design.

1. **Audience:** Your audience is your first area of research.
   A. What is your audience's knowledge? This information dictates what technical language you can use effectively and how much description and explanation you will be required to provide.
   B. What is his or her attitude? If you know his or her attitude, you will know how persuasive you will need to be, or what areas you will need to cover in the most depth.
   C. What does your audience need, what do they have, what can they afford, and what are you offering them?
   D. In order to convince your audience members of their needs, you will rely upon providing information that identifies *what* their need is, *where* the need occurs, *how* the need occurs, and *why* they need what you are offering.

2. **Deliverables:** What is the bottom line, the value of the deal, or the amount of savings in the long term? The proposal revolves around the deliverable or the end result.
   A. Deliverables must be specific. If you are providing research, your deliverables will need to provide your audience with goods. For instance, you will deliver a conference presentation, a publication, or information that will improve policy.
   B. In order to prove your reliability and gain the audience members' trust, you must provide a schedule of when the deliverables will be provided and include steps to producing the deliverables.
   C. Providing the audience members with additional information is important to effectively persuade.
      I. Describe the location or site of the deliverable.
      II. Provide an explanation of any installations or site preparations.
      III. Provide your credentials to validate that you and your team know how to do what is expected for the proposed project.
      IV. Use your persuasive skills to convince your audience that they need this service or product.

3. **Format:** Proposals are divided into three parts: front matter, body, and back matter.
   A. Front Matter: The front matter has three elements: cover or transmittal letter, title page, and table of contents.
      I. Cover Letter or Transmittal Letter: Introduces you and your company (usually in three or four paragraphs). This document is formal and should be written in the

formatting of a business letter, or if it is an in-house (your own company), you may use a memo. You will cover the following in the transmittal or cover letter:

    a) Introduce you and/or your company.

    b) Express gratitude for the company allowing you the opportunity to submit your proposal as well as gratitude for any help from the company by way of research materials.

    c) Remind the person or company of any prior relationships you or your company may have had with their company or what similar work you have accomplished.

    d) Write a brief summary of the proposal's recommendations. (Business writing begins with the ending. Explain what you are going to do and the cost.)

    e) End with the qualifications you have for this project.

  II. Title Page: Functions to provide the audience with all of the specific information. Includes the following information:

    a) The date, the name, and the logo of the organization where it is being submitted.

    b) Your company name and logo.

    c) Some people will include a brief summary of the entire proposal in this section.

  III. Table of Contents (TOC): Functions to guide the readers to specific sections of the proposal. Typically, this is formatted with the title of the heading or section followed by the page number.

  IV. List of Figures: You will use a list of figures if your proposal has six or more figures. Figures represent photos, pictorials, graphics, charts, tables, maps, and more. You should arrange your list by figure number and page number.

B. Body: The body is broken into four parts: the executive summary, the introduction, the details, and the conclusion.

  I. Executive Summary: The summary is designed to provide a few sentences on each of the major elements of your proposal. **(Refer to the Executive Summary resource.)**

  II. Introduction: The introduction assists the reader in understanding the proposal's scope, context, and organization. It should emphasize the benefits for the audience. The introduction should provide information on the following:

    a) The problem or opportunity in specific monetary terms.

    b) Activities that will end in a deliverable.

    c) The background of the problem, using your research.

    d) Your sources; don't forget to set up the quote, paraphrase, or summary by introducing it, following through with it, and then showing how it relates to your topic.

    e) The scope; what you are proposing to do and what you are not going to do. This is important for setting the stage for your deliverables.

    f) The organization of your proposal.

    g) The important terms or concepts.

III. Details: This is where the graphics are incorporated into the work. It is a good idea to use headings in this section for all the subsections. Any subtitle should be offset by a heading.

  a) Description of the Program: Provides a more thorough description of the problem and the solution.
  b) Budget: Includes a detailed a budget, preferably by using graphs or time tables.
    i. Direct costs refer to everyone's salary and any fringe benefits, such as travel costs.
    ii. Indirect costs cover the overhead or secretarial, clerical, operating expenses, etc.
  c) Work or Task schedules: Provides staffing information and refers to the appendices for resumes.
    i.   Can be created in one of three ways:
      1) Tables are the simplest method
      2) Bar charts give more information, but still are limited
      3) Network Diagrams diagram the interdependence among activities.
    ii. If there is a site preparation, it will go here.
    iii. If you need to train people, you will include that in this space.
    iv. You should end this section with a request for approval.
  d) Deliverables: Deliverables are the services, goods, or research that you are going to provide to the audience. Provide information on:
    i. The detailed product or service.
    ii. What, if any, product or service the company is now using.
    iii. The exact cost of this product or service.
    iv. Long term savings in both money and labor.

IV. Conclusion: Use this opportunity to summarize the proposal's key points and include your company's strong points. This is your chance to leave a lasting impression.

C. Back Matter: This section provides your reader with information that would have bogged down the body of the proposal.

A. Appendices: The appendix is where you include supplemental information:
  I. Resume of key employees.
  II. Insurance information for your company and your employees.
  III. Support staff: accountant, bank, attorney, insurance companies, etc.
  IV. Organizational charts.
  V. Workflow diagrams.
  VI. Proof of qualifications of any of your employees.

B. Bibliography: Use the bibliography to list the sources that you consulted—even if you are using sources from your own company.

C. Glossary: This is where you define technical terms and organization names that may not be familiar to your readers.