

Discussion of (1) Evaluation, Dissemination (Replication), and Continuation Plans and (2) Important Content for the Qualifications Section

(from *Guide to Grant Proposals*.)

Evaluation

Why Evaluate? Evaluations pinpoint what is really happening in your project so you can improve your project efficiency. Based on evaluation information, you can better allocate resources, improve your services, and strengthen your overall project performance. Beyond these immediate benefits, a project evaluation can uncover needs to be served in your next proposal and make it easier to get and sustain funding.

If you want to include an evaluation component in your proposal but know nothing about the subject, consider borrowing ideas from the evaluation plans developed for similar programs or ask a colleague or consultant to review the rest of the proposal and develop an appropriate evaluation strategy. Too frequently, proposals don't explain how the project will be evaluated. At best, they mention some vague process, such as holding a discussion meeting or assigning the evaluation to an expert, with no specifics on how the evaluation will be conducted or what will be learned from the evaluation.

Using Evaluators Effectively. Whether you use an internal or an external evaluator, or both, be sure to include them in the proposal development process. A common proposal-writing mistake is to budget an amount for evaluation costs and worry later about the evaluation procedure. Instead, involve evaluators in the proposal writing. Be sure to give them a copy of your project objectives. Remember that pointed objectives will simplify the evaluation process.

An evaluator should provide you with important proposal information. Specifically, ask your evaluators to identify precisely what will be evaluated, what information they will need to conduct the evaluation, where that information will be obtained, what data collection instruments will be used to get that information, what evaluation design will be used, what analyses will be completed, and what questions you will be able to answer as a result of the evaluation.

How to Evaluate. Evaluation is essentially a four-step process. As you will see, if the objectives and methodology sections of your proposal are precise, you are well on your way to completing the evaluation protocol.

1. Identify precisely what will be evaluated. If you wrote measurable objectives, you already know what to evaluate.
2. Determine the methods you will use to evaluate each objective. More precisely, you will need to describe the information you will need and how you propose to collect it.

3. Complete your evaluation design. Specify the analyses you plan to make and then carry out your evaluation by collecting and interpreting the data needed for each objective. Your evaluation design may be simply to observe the behavior of a particular population or something more complex like a rigorous experimental and multiple control group design.
4. Summarize the resulting data analyses and indicate its use. Consider including mock data tables that show what your resulting data might look like.

Note that of these four steps, the first two are completed as you write the objectives and methods sections of your proposal. In other words, you are half-done with the evaluation section before you start it.

Key Questions to Answer. As you write the evaluation section, answer these questions. Does your evaluation section

1. Describe why evaluation is needed in the project?
2. Provide a definition of what is meant by evaluation?
3. Clearly identify the purpose of your evaluation and the audiences to be served by its results?
4. Demonstrate that an appropriate evaluation procedure is included for every project objective?
5. Provide a general organizational plan or model for your evaluation?
6. Demonstrate that the scope of the evaluation is appropriate to the project? Demonstrate the extent to which the project is practical, relevant, and generalizable?
7. Describe what information will be needed to complete the evaluation, the potential sources for this information, and the instruments that will be used for its collection?
8. Clearly summarize any reports to be provided to the funding source based on the evaluation, and generally describe their content and timing?

Writing Tips for Evaluation Section. Include a separate evaluation component for each project objective. Strengthen your evaluation section by including examples of surveys, questionnaires, data collection instruments, data analysis forms, and other evaluation methodologies in order to demonstrate the credibility of your evaluation section. If you use outside evaluators, identify costs, credentials, and experience. Evaluation sections are less likely to be included in basic research than training grants. Replicability is the primary evaluation criterion in most basic science research proposals.

Dissemination

Purpose of Dissemination. Dissemination is the means by which you let others know about your project: its purpose, methods, and accomplishments. Among other things, it generates publicity for your sponsor and you. As grants become more competitive, dissemination of results is increasingly important. No longer is it sufficient to say you will submit a journal article or present a paper at a professional society meeting. Instead, specify the tentative titles, target

journals, and submission dates. Likewise, indicate which meetings will be attended, including dates and locations for presenting papers.

Key Questions to Answer. As you write the dissemination section, answer these questions. Does your dissemination section

1. Indicate why dissemination activities are important to your project?
2. Clearly identify the intended outcome of the dissemination effort?
3. Include a feasible and appropriate plan for dissemination?
4. Succinctly describe any products resulting from the dissemination effort?
5. Demonstrate that you are well grounded in theory and research on the dissemination and utilization of knowledge?
6. Provide sufficient detail on proposed dissemination procedures to justify the budget request?
7. Specify clearly who will be responsible for dissemination and why they are capable?
8. Indicate why the dissemination will get the necessary information to the appropriate audiences in a form they can use when needed?

Dissemination Strategies for Proposals. Choose from the following dissemination options the ones that would be most appropriate for your proposal: A project newsletter; conferences and seminars; site visits; interim working papers; convention papers; journal articles; pamphlets; books or manuals; displays at meetings; demonstrations; audiovisual materials; speeches; press releases; postings on computer networks or Web pages; executive fax summaries.

[From Grants Workbench Tutorial:]

Replication Plan

Definitions: the intellectual property or capital generated by your project, appropriately codified for effective storage, dissemination, and retrieval, for the purpose of helping others to use it.

In the effective distribution of their scarce resources, funding agencies want to support projects that will help achieve their agency's mission at the least possible cost. Understandably, and humanely, they desire the greatest bang for their buck. Therefore, leverage is important to them. They want you to make it easier for others to implement similar successful projects, building on your lessons learned and extending your project's benefits. Hence, the need for an effective replication plan (often called a “dissemination plan”).

Creating such a plan should be an important element in your project's design. Therefore, you should carefully plan how you will:

- codify your project's results and lessons learned
- make them available so that others can effectively and efficiently use them

Continuation Plan

Definition: a plan indicating the resources to be employed to meet or defray the project's costs after the funding period.

Most funding agencies want to function less like a rich uncle who gives you money year to year and more like a supportive parent who "raises" you to a certain level of maturity and then sends you on your way. Changing metaphors, you don't want keep feeding at the funder's trough, at least for this one project. Get the project funded, conduct it successfully, and make it sustainable, proving your capabilities for getting funding for another, future, project. When necessary, therefore, you want to convince the funder that your project can sustain itself after the funding period. You want, therefore, to have a continuation plan.

The continuation plan can indicate the resources to be employed to meet or defray the project's costs after the funding period. These resources can be obtained by:

- establishing partnerships with organizations similar to yours, with private (especially local) companies, and with public (state or federal) agencies
- instituting a program that effectively uses volunteers (e.g., docents, community activists, teacher aids)
- generating revenues through donations, sales, and fees

Discussion of Qualifications-Related Material That Should Be Considered For Your Qualifications Section

[From The Grants Workbench Tutorial:]

Your History and Mission

Unless your organization was just born yesterday, it has a history. It has changed over time, re-focusing and re-inventing itself to meet the changing needs in the community and the changing constituencies it serves. Your organization also has a mission—clear goals and objectives for serving its constituencies. Establish the clear connection among:

- your organization's current state of development
- its mission and the goals it currently strives to achieve
- the "fit" between your organization's mission and the funder's goals and mission as stated in its guidelines.

The content of the above bullets should also exist in your cover letter.

Your Relevant Previous, Ongoing, and/or Future Projects

Getting funding is a lot like getting credit. In both cases, your likelihood of success is higher if you already have it. Funders, like creditors, are persuaded by good track records, and you should

discuss yours. Unless your organization is absolutely new, you have completed (or have underway) projects and programs that have helped your organization to achieve its mission. Describe those projects and programs persuasively: Sing your praises! And identify the praises of others. If your projects or programs have received awards or recognition, be certain to identify those as well.

Your Constituencies and Relationships

Describe your positioning in your community and your *raison d'être*, by identifying the people you serve, how you have benefited them, and how your future projects will continue to do so while also helping to achieve your organization's mission. Needless to say, this information can be enormously important in demonstrating to a funder that you are well connected in the larger effort to improve the community and that, as part of that effort, your organization plays a unique role. If possible, specifically identify your organization's relationships with and difference from similar organizations, the people you serve and how they are now and will continue to be involved in near- and longer- term projects to help achieve your organization's mission.